BING

SPRING 2007

No. 145

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

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BING magazine:	http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html
Bing Crosby Internet Museum:	www.mcckc.edu/~crosby/

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(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

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EDITORIAL

Bing Crosby fans enjoyed an eventful and productive end to 2006 to be sure, and 2007 promises to be just as successful. While it's a milestone we'd rather not have to celebrate, perhaps the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing will generate some positive media recognition come October. The forthcoming launch of the Official Bing Crosby website, bingcrosby.com, which is being developed by Mary Crosby's husband, Mark Brodka, should generate even more exposure for the Crosbys on the World Wide Web.

And talking of anniversaries, 2007 will mark quite a few:

50th anniversary of Bing's marriage to Kathryn Grant

50th anniversary of the classic "Bing With A Beat" album

60th anniversary of the first Bing Crosby National Pro-Am played at Pebble Beach, CA

65th anniversary of Bing's original Decca recording of 'White Christmas'

70th anniversary of the first Crosby golf tournament in Rancho Santa Fe

70th anniversary of the opening of the Del Mar race track

One of the biggest honors bestowed to Bing in recent years has to be the renaming of the historic Metropolitan Performing Arts Center in Spokane to the Bing Crosby Theater on December 8th. Bing surely was smiling down from above at the capacity crowd assembled for the dedication of this, the former Clemmer Theater, where Bing got his start singing so many years ago. If Bob Hope can have an airport named after him, then surely Bing deserves to have his hometown theater named in his honor! Stephanie Plowman has a full report.

Bing also got some good exposure on television in December, with airings of his classic film *White Christmas* on TCM, tied in with a special reissue box set of the movie and soundtrack CD available at Starbuck's Coffee Houses. Then, for two weeks in a row, a CBS News television program, *CBS Sunday Morning*, featured segments pertaining to Bing. On December 17th, in a segment on David Crosby of all people, footage of Bing performing 'Adeste Fideles' was needed. My friend Bob DeFlores contacted me, and I was able to provide CBS with a couple of video versions of the song. However, they opted to use Bing's 1942 Decca recording instead. Both Bob and myself did receive nods in the end credits, though.

The second, and far more substantial piece, took place on the Christmas Eve broadcast, with a segment was devoted to the origins of the song 'White Christmas'. Jody Rosen, who authored a book on the song, and Irving Berlin's daughter Linda were interviewed on camera for the piece. Many of your fellow ICC members contributed photos, audio and video to the production, including Bob DeFlores, Arne Fogel, Ron Hall, Steven Lewis, Ron Bosley, Malcolm Macfarlane and myself. A well-worn private home recording of Bing's debut performance of the song, from the Christmas Day broadcast of the Kraft Music Hall in 1941, was aired on television for the first time. I uncovered this rarity some time ago from friend Joe Onorato, and Steven Lewis was able to help provide some much-needed noise reduction to the scratchy disc. Jon Carras at CBS was overwhelmed by the amount of material he received for the piece, and by the generosity of Crosby fans. He gave credit to The Bing Crosby Collection / Gonzaga University, The Arne Fogel Collection, Bob DeFlores and myself in the end credits to the show. All in all, a nice way to start Christmas Eve, 2006 for many of us!

Here's wishing all of you a healthy, happy and prosperous 2007!

Greg Van Beek

Thanks, Greg and we owe thanks to Greg for our front cover too. Jon Oye provided the back cover from his collection. Many of you have complimented Jon on the front cover he produced for our last issue and the good news is that he has supplied another colorised photo which we shall use in the summer edition.

I am sorry to advise you that the Bing Birthday Bash being organised in Las Vegas for May 3rd by Carolyn Schneider will not now take place. This is a great pity but I suppose the vast distances involved in the USA make it difficult to put together a viable prestige function in any one area. Ron Field has been trying to arrange a get-together at Jasper Park Lodge in Canada and again the cost of this is too prohibitive to attract sufficient numbers.

So, what have we got for you in the magazine this time? We have an interview with Alice Ludes of the Music Maids for starters but really there's too much to mention separately. I hope there's something there for everyone and to use one of Bing's phrases, that the magazine merits your approval. My thanks to all of the contributors.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

2006 was another successful year for the ICC and it is very heartening that members have begun the New Year with very generous support for the club. The list of donors is the longest ever and their encouragement and generosity reflect support for a remarkably small team of dedicated officers and supporting contributors.

Malcolm, Wig, Laura, Greg, David and our knowledgeable contributors deserve our sincere thanks for their assiduous work in bringing us the best magazine and club, of its kind in the world. Members have much to be thankful for.

Magazine costs will rise this year and thanks to our benevolent membership we can keep the cost of membership stable for yet another year. However, it is my duty to keep costs under review and I will be reporting back to you as the year progresses.

NEW MEMBERS

AUSTRALIA

We are pleased to welcome Bob Blackmore who wants to encourage more Australians to join the ICC.

Due to my report having to be compiled early, details of other new members will be held over until the next issue of BING.

DONATIONS

EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO ICC

Ernest Sutkowski's special contribution to the ICC was acknowledged in the last issue of BING and his magnanimity has inspired other members to give generous support to the club.

Jean Rainey (founder member of the British Bing Club, 1950) has contributed an exceptional sum to aid club funds and it is Jean's wish that the International Club Crosby continues to flourish. We are truly grateful to Jean for her support and encouragement and it is pleasing to report that the following members have given generously in the past few months. We are grateful to:

Jim Watt & Hazel Nunn from Australia, Paul Hennessey (Raheny, Dublin), Christine Mann (Lee, London), Frank Startup (Cirencester, Glos.), John Davis (Firehouse, Dublin), Bob Halls (Stowmarket, Suffolk), Harry Ross (Havant, Hampshire), Donald Bostock (Virginia Water, Surrey), Tim Page (Douglas, Isle of Man), Jim Byrne (Derry, N. Ireland), Dave Spong (Sutton, Surrey), Roger Addey (Camborne, Cornwall), Larry Farrell (Drogheda, Co. Louth), Mr W A Green (Evesham, Worcester), Lewis Grassby (Dartford, Kent), Jeremy Rose (Cairanne, France), Rev. Michael Collins (Florida, USA), Edgar Lawson (Wallasey, Merseyside), B. Lane (Anerley, London), Alf Plumber (Catford, London), Klaus Halm (Berlin, Germany), Wally Oldfield (Rayleigh, Essex), Mike O'Donaghue (Romford, Essex), Edward Broadley, (Leeds, West Yorkshire), Alan Lee (Sunderland, Tyne & Wear), Brenda Sellers (Louth, Lincs.), Billy Ridgeway (Castleknock, Dublin), Dave Campkin (Weston - Super - Mare, Somerset), John Bignell (Wembley, Middlesex), Michael Tyce (Waterstock, Oxford), Dennis Saville, (Leigh-On-Sea, Essex), Roy Irvine (Belfast, N.I.), Desmond Hellier (West Hampstead, London), Robert Sharp (Ilford, Essex), Geoff Robinson (Solihull, West Midlands), Larry Farrell (Drogheda, Co. Louth), John McVicar (Mount Florida, Glasgow), Peter Howard (Formby, Merseyside), Elizabeth Gregory (South Croydon, Surrey), Leslie Mills (Stoke-On-Trent, Staffs.) John Teale (Wythenshawe, Manchester), Mr Tolliday (Rayleigh, Essex), Sylvia Lawrence (Cambridge), Mike Mansley (Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan), John Stiles (Pinner, Middlesex), Mr E G Allen (Wimbledon,

London), Ian Arnott (Inverness, Scotland), Mr R Crew (Hemel Hempstead, Herts.), R W Bendelow (Rugby, Warwicks.), Stan Woodford (Hornchurch, Essex), Bill England, (Worcester Park, Surrey), Bert Bishop (Maylandsea, Essex), Frank Challenger (Ripley, Derbyshire), Chris Hitchcock (Dublin), Margaret North (Staines, Middlesex), Arthur Blood (Derby), Matthew & Jean Sprott (Coatbridge, Lanarkshire), Vera Campbell (Hull, East Yorks), Stan Hellens (Birchington, Kent), Derek Perkins (Dublin), Frank Toner (Dublin), Alex Vaughan (Edinburgh), Robert Larkin (Tralee, Co. Kerry), Eric Jackson (Wath Upon Dearn, South Yorkshire), C Brown (Nantwich, Cheshire), Maggie Ryan (Bridgewater, Somerset), Arnold Pope (Whitefield, Manchester), Ragnar Uppman (Gimo, Sweden), Ron Holder (Old Buckenham, Norfolk), Tom Maher (Worcester), Joan Griffiths (Benfleet, Essex), Albert Harvey (Onger, Essex), Nico v d Seyp (Sommersdijk, The Netherlands), Maria Roth (Billdal, Sweden), Tony Carpenter (Brighton, Essex), Barbara Holmes (Edgware, Middlesex), George Patmore (Shrewsbury, Shropshire), Mario Bellantone (Hidesheim, Germany), Maurice Beardmore (Derby), Frans van der Kolff (Apeldoorm, The Netherlands), Derek McNamee (Dublin), Richard Cane (Dulwich, London), Philippe Peerboom (Maarssen, The Netherlands), Ron Field (Morton, Washington, USA), Paddy Gilley (Cork, Ireland), Matt Conroy (Finglass, West Dublin), Terry Mahoney (Cheltenham, Glos.), John C Marshall (Teddington, Middlesex), Jonathan Cook (Devizes, Wiltshire), Bill Wesley (Upminster, Essex), John McNicholas (Harrow, Middlesex), Ronald Moss (Hull, East Yorkshire), Frank Brannigan (Co. Dublin).

Further donations will be acknowledged in the summer 2007 issue of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness I draw members' attention to the passing of the following members.

Fred Reynolds (Yardley, Birmingham),
Peter Keegan (Tonyrefail, Mid Glamorgan),
Ron Pearson (Southend-on-Sea, Essex).

Ron, Fred and Peter were dedicated Bing enthusiasts, all of whom spent a great deal of their lifetimes enjoying and admiring Bing Crosby's work. A warm and personal tribute is paid to Fred in this issue of BING and those who knew Fred will empathise with Ken Crossland's eulogy. Fred was a dedicated researcher in matters Crosby and his legacy is a well-written selection of books that enhance the Crosby experience. Michael Reynolds, Fred's son, inherits Fred's prestigious collection and will cherish it for the rest of his life. Happily, an important Crosby Collection stays with a family member who enjoys being a Crosby Collector.

Peter Keegan's wife June, informed us that Peter on leaving the RAF in 1952 was already an ardent Bing enthusiast who collected his 78s and he seized every opportunity to video Bing's films as they came onto British TV.

Ron Pearson was a regular attendee at the Leeds meeting until ill health prevented him making the trip to the North from his Essex home.

We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Ron, Fred and Peter.

MEMBERSHIP

Members met my appeal for an early response with favour but at the time of writing I am still awaiting 106 UK members to renew their subscription.

CALENDAR 2007

Ron Bosley's excellent calendar has sold out and may I thank Ron and all supporting members for this outstanding result.

JONZO 46 & 47

These two CDs, issued in January, are collector's gems with superb sound. John and his collaborating collectors have brought us 1060 tracks, almost all of which reproduce faithfully the original 78 sound, without the distracting surface noise, that we used to experience when playing our records on what would now be regarded as ancient equipment. John's achievement is monumental and deserves special recognition. Perhaps the best way to recognise John's accomplishments is to buy these magnificent CDs and I urge any member who has not bought the series to do so and perhaps those who have been supporting John could take extra copies.

Regrettably, John has announced that he intends to step down as producer after the issue of CD 51. John cites lack of support by members, as his main reason for standing down. Fortunately, personnel involved with the production of the CDs will continue the series and thus we can look forward to the day when all of Bing's commercial 78 tracks will have been digitally remastered.

LEEDS 2007

Date for your diary for the 42nd dinner/meeting is **Sunday 7th of October 2007.**

Due to holiday commitments (Hawaii!) my report is being compiled in January and thus several names could be missing from the lists of donors and new members. I will rectify these omissions in the next issue of the journal. Meanwhile, enjoy your Bing collecting.

Until summer, my kindest regards to all members.

Michael Crampton

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2006

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions and donations	9937	Production of BING magazine	8991
Sales - Calendars	1773	Calendars	1853
Leeds meeting - receipts	314	AGM (Leeds) costs	213
Sales – Troubadour	2662	Troubadour	44
Sales - Jonzo CDs	130	Secretarial costs	485
Sales - Back issues	105	Jonzo CDs	209
Legacy	500	Editorial costs	130
Advert	50	Postage – back issues	9
"Me & Uncle Bing" (receipts)	129	"Me & Uncle Bing" (payments)	129
Bank Interest 2006	7	Publicity	37
Bank balance 31/12/2005	5788	Bank balance 31/12/2006	9295
	21395		21395

Note:

1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary and amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. The club is able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2007.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

Bing's Birthday Bash

The Crosby event planned for May 3rd. '07, "Bing's Birthday Bash" has been cancelled due to a lack of interest. Please accept my very sincere thanks to all of you that responded. We just didn't draw a large enough audience to justify the expense. Rich Little and Coleen Gray had agreed to be our honored guests along with Buddy Bregman.

Although this was a good idea, I guess it was just a few years too late. On May 3rd, his birthday, let's all remember Uncle Bing in our own way.

My very best to everyone,

Carolyn Schneider

Bing Day – May 5th

Barry Whittingham tells us that there will be another Bing Day at his home on Saturday 5th May 2007. He hopes that some of you who could not attend last year will be able to come this time. He can cope with up to 15 people at his modest sized bungalow. If enough members show an interest in coming, there will be a small fee of £5 to cover refreshments and a caterer.

Those interested can contact Barry at 25c Garton Close, Cinderhill, Nottingham NG6 8RZ, UK or e-mail him at barry.whittingham@ntlworld.com

A New BBC series

As we went to press we received an email from Barbra Paskin, the BBC's Los Angeles correspondent (who also wrote a much acclaimed book about Dudley Moore).

"We're making a 6 part radio series on Bing Crosby that follows the success of our series last year on Sinatra. Our theme is a little unusual - we're telling his story by following the trail he took throughout his life. Budget prevents visiting more than 4 towns but for Crosby we've selected Spokane, Hillsborough/Carmel/Palm Beach, Los Angeles and Palm Springs/Del Mar/Rancho Santa Fe. (Our Sinatra began in Hoboken and went to Reno, Los Angeles, Palm Springs.)

During our brief visit in each place we'll be talking to residents who remember Bing or who may in some way have worked with him. For Sinatra we spoke to restaurateurs, barbers, saloon owners, etc. With Bing we'd also like to find a jockey, a caddy, people like that. We'll also visit a couple of the studios where he worked. And we're hoping to persuade Kathryn Crosby to talk with us briefly. . ."

Naturally, we have offered to help in any way and further developments are awaited.

Bing's club lends hand to kids

The Desert Sun **paper of November 12 carried a report by Betty Francis on the new Bing Crosby Restaurant in the Palm Springs area.**

Bing Crosby's Nightclub on Highway 111 in Rancho Mirage is worthy of his name.

It is relaxed yet elegant, full of memories yet thoroughly modern. And Bing's widow, the pretty, petite Kathryn Crosby, looked very much at home there, autographing copies of her book, "My Last Years With Bing".

Wednesday's grand opening, benefiting the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program, drew over 400

guests at $100 each and raised an estimated $38,000 for the charity.

Club owners Rick and Jeff Dudum were on hand, overseeing every detail of their guests' comfort. And their dad, Rocky Dudum, of Desert Horizons Country Club, was there overseeing his boys.

Frank Gaeta, also of Desert Horizons, and chairman of the board at Big Brothers Big Sisters, mingled quietly with the guests, thanking them for supporting the organization.

All of the nightclub's walls are covered, floor-to-raised ceiling, with nearly life-size photos of Bing, Kathryn, and friends like Jimmy Stewart, Frank Sinatra, Grace Kelly, Jackie Gleason and dozens of other legends.

Although barely open, the wait staff did an amazing job of serving delicious, piping-hot hors d'oeuvres to the packed crowd and the lines at the food stations were surprisingly short. Wonder how they did that?

Big Brothers Big Sisters executive Director Judy Tobin May reported that the number of matches between at-risk children and mentors reached a new high of 270 this year.

The "Bigs" and "Littles" as they are called, get together on flexible schedules for an hour or two of simple pleasures such as making cookies, going to a park, or seeing a movie and - always - talk-talk-talk.

"There are always more kids waiting than there are mentors, so we hope to recruit more adults this season" said May.

For Big Brothers Big Sisters information, phone 568-3977 or visit bigbrothersbigsisters.org.

For details on Bing Crosby's Nightclub: 674-5764.

Betty Francis

A Crosby trip by Pullman

The Woman's Club of Minneapolis, and American Pullman Traditions, has organized a trip by train to San Francisco May 7th to 12th to dine at Bing Crosby's restaurant in Walnut Creek with Mrs. Bing Crosby, and then on to Hillsborough for a private tour of the Crosby estate.

The tour departs May 7th at 1:50pm from Union Station in Chicago aboard the historic California Zephyr, with a stop at Omaha that evening. May 8th, the train stops at Denver and Salt Lake City. May 9th it arrives in Reno, then on for a last stop in Emeryville, CA where you'll be taken via motor coach to San Francisco to check in at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. May 10th can be spent as you wish touring the sites of San Francisco. Dinner with Mrs. Crosby at Bing Crosby's Restaurant in Walnut Creek will take place at 7pm that evening. The morning of May 11th is open for your own leisure activities. At 2pm, the tour of the Crosby estate begins. You'll enjoy tea with Mrs. Crosby at the beautiful Bing Crosby estate, and following the tour, she will personally autograph a copy of her book "My Life With Bing" for each of you to take home. May 12th is check out at the hotel. Return travel arrangements are your responsibility.

Cost of the trip is $3,620, which includes:

2 luxury rail cars (the 1950 Pacific Union and Royal Street cars) one way Chicago to Emeryville, CA, including meals, beverages, wine, mixed drinks, hors d'oeuvres

3 nights accommodations, Mark Hopkins hotel, San Francisco cocktail and dinner, Bing Crosby's restaurant, with your host Kathryn Crosby

Tea and Tour of the Crosby Estate with Kathryn Crosby

Motor Coach service from Emeryville to San Francisco, to Walnut Creek and Bing Crosby's Restaurant, and to Hillsborough and the Crosby Estate.

This does not include air fare to departure and from destination sites. Travelers are to make their own arrangements to Chicago and back from San Francisco. Although reservations and deposit of $1000 were originally requested before March 7th it may still be worthwhile checking to see if there are any places left. Payment by check only. For more information, or to reserve space on the train, contact:
John Vaughan
American Pullman Traditions
915 St. Clair Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
(651) 224-6024

You're beaming over 'White Christmas'

The Chicago Sun-Times printed this article by Darel Jevens on Christmas Day and we are reproducing it with grateful thanks to the paper and the writer.

It was written for Californians, a ballad about people spending December in sunny climes where the treetops never glisten. But "White Christmas" touches plenty of hearts in Illinois, too.

Earlier this month, the Sun-Times posted a list of 25 holiday songs online and asked readers to choose the best one ever. Almost 5,000 votes came in. And the favorite, by far, was the wistful number made famous decades ago by Bing Crosby.

"I never get tired of hearing it, and it usually brings a tear to my eye," reader Barbara from Franklin Park wrote. Jerry from Oak Lawn called it "the epitome of evocative nostalgia."

"White Christmas" has been America's holiday song of choice almost from the minute it debuted in Crosby's

1942 film *Holiday Inn*. It won the best-song Oscar and became a monster pop hit for several years running. Guinness World Records calls it history's best-selling single, estimating people have picked up some 50 million copies.

At first, "White Christmas" resonated with homesick Americans fighting overseas and the families who missed them. But why has it endured since? A few possible reasons:

1. It's inclusive: Like so many Christmas perennials—including "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "The Christmas Song"—"White Christmas" was written by a Jew. Irving Berlin, the Russian-born son of a cantor, scoffed at the disconnect between his faith and the one at the center of his song, saying he wrote it "as an American."

2. There's a lot to it: As written, "White Christmas" has an introductory verse, a few lighthearted lines about what it's like in "Beverly Hills, L.A.," where "the orange and the palm trees sway." But Crosby skipped those in his version, rendering the song more universal. Almost every singer since has followed Der Bingle's lead. But a few purists—Darlene Love, Mel Torme, Rosemary Clooney—put the preamble back in.

3. It's literary: So powerful was the symbolic value of "White Christmas" that it figured in as an allegory in two novels by giants of literature: Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night.* The song's storied history is even the subject of a book unto itself, *White Christmas*, by New York writer Jody Rosen.

4. The Elvis connection: Berlin, no fan of rock 'n' roll, was appalled when Elvis Presley cut a somewhat snarky version of "White Christmas" on his 1957 holiday album. Then pushing 70, the songwriter asked radio stations not to play it. Most of them liked Elvis better and ignored him.

5. It goes beyond Bing: Another widely heard version of "White Christmas" comes from the Drifters, whose dramatic doo-wop overhaul appeared in 1954 and gets radio play to this day. The song has been covered by hundreds of artists as diverse as Crash Test Dummies, the Flaming Lips and the California Raisins.

Darel Jevens

Star-Telegram, Fort Worth Poll

And here's an extract from the Star-Telegram of Fort Worth of November 26 about another poll.

We've wrapped up on our holiday-music readers poll and the results—at least when it comes to your all-time favorite winter-weather song—are about as surprising as a snowfall in the Alps. More than 3,600 of you voted, and Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" won in an avalanche. The Kings—Nat and Elvis—ceded second place to the Prince of Pubescent Crooners. And bringing up the rear is a pairing with unrivaled ear-piercing potential: Mariah Carey and the Chipmunks.

1. White Christmas - Bing Crosby (1,238 total votes)
2. Oh, Holy Night - Johnny Mathis (547)
3. The Christmas Song - Nat King Cole (506)
4. Blue Christmas - Elvis Presley (379)
5. Jingle Bell Rock - Brenda Lee (225)
6. Feliz Navidad - Jose Feliciano (185)
7. Christmas Time Is Here (Theme from A Charlie Brown Christmas) -Vince Guaraldi Trio (158)
8. Santa Claus Is Coming to Town - Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band (152)
9. Silent Night - Mariah Carey (130)
10. The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late) - the Chipmunks (108)

Holiday Inn is a hit again!

Ken Barnes writes:

I just thought I'd let you all know that Universal's US release of Laureate's *Holiday Inn Special Edition* has figured very prominently in Amazon's Top DVDs over the Christmas period - climbing into the Top 30 of the Amazon Sales Range - which means that Bing had two DVDs in the Best Sellers (the other, of course, being *White Christmas*.)

This year, so I am told, more DVDs and CDs were sold online than in any previous year, accounting for some 60 per cent of overall sales.

It's good to see *Holiday Inn* grabbing such a large share of the seasonal market - holding its own against such perennial classics as *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946), *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), *A Christmas Carol* (1951) and *White Christmas* (1954) - and outselling (by as much as 10 to 1) such "hot" DVDs as *King Kong Special Extended Edition* and *X-Men -Last Stand.* Not bad going for a 64 year-old black and white movie.

Ken Barnes

Frank Dolson's Collection

Frank Dolson, a much respected sportswriter for 40 years for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and also a Club Crosby member, died in October. He left a huge collection of Crosby memorabilia which includes 45 crates of Crosby LPs (many unopened), hundreds of 78s including V-discs, commercial tapes, CDs, books, movies, radio shows, including a few radio transcription discs, magazines featuring Bing and old copies of BING and BINGANG magazines. In the collection, for example, are 4 sealed copies of "Soft Lights and Sweet Music" and the entire "Bing's Hollywood" series. The collection includes memorabilia autographed by Bing.

After some initial confusion, the executor of the estate has shipped all the memorabilia except records to Gonzaga (Gonzaga paid for packing/shipping) and 15 cartons of albums to Judy Schmid who is preparing an

inventory of them for Gonzaga. The inventory will then be sent to Stephanie Plowman at Gonzaga who will compare the list to theirs. What they don't have Judy will ship to them; the rest will be put on eBay by Judy with proceeds to benefit the Crosby Collection at Gonzaga.

Judy Schmid has spoken to the estate attorney who sent her a letter verifying the items were from Mr. Dolson's estate in the hope that a copy of, say, "White Christmas" will sell for more if a Philadelphia fan of Mr. Dolson knows it used to belong to him.

Stephanie Plowman and her graduate student assistant plan on culling the duplicate/triplicate albums already in the Crosby Collection and selling them on eBay as well in the spring and over the summer to produce funds for the benefit of the Collection.

Guinness World Records

In our last issue, we mentioned that the ICC's claim to fame as the oldest established fan club had disappeared from the Guinness Book and from its web site. We wrote to the Guinness people about this and received the following reply.

Thank you for your letter of 24th October regarding the omission of your fan club from the 2007 edition of Guinness World Records.

Each edition of Guinness World Records features about 4,000 records but our database contains more than 40,000 entries. Each record is considered for inclusion on an annual basis but sadly the vast majority cannot always be featured in the book.

We can assure you that International Club Crosby remains on our database as the world's longest-running fan club and you will be considered for inclusion in the 2008 edition which, I have been told, will feature a "fans and followers" spread. Your fan club will, of course, be up for selection.

In my capacity as quiz-writer for the bibleofpop.com (British Hit Singles & Albums) website, I will be delighted to feature International Club Crosby as one of my questions when the site is relaunched shortly.

Yours sincerely,
Matthew White
Correspondence Editor, Guinness World Records

'Crosby' day at Pebble

As always, the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am tournament at generated some very good publicity for Bing. We have covered the background to the tournament in some depth in previous years so we will not repeat the exercise this time. However, it was amusing to see Bing being blamed for the weather.

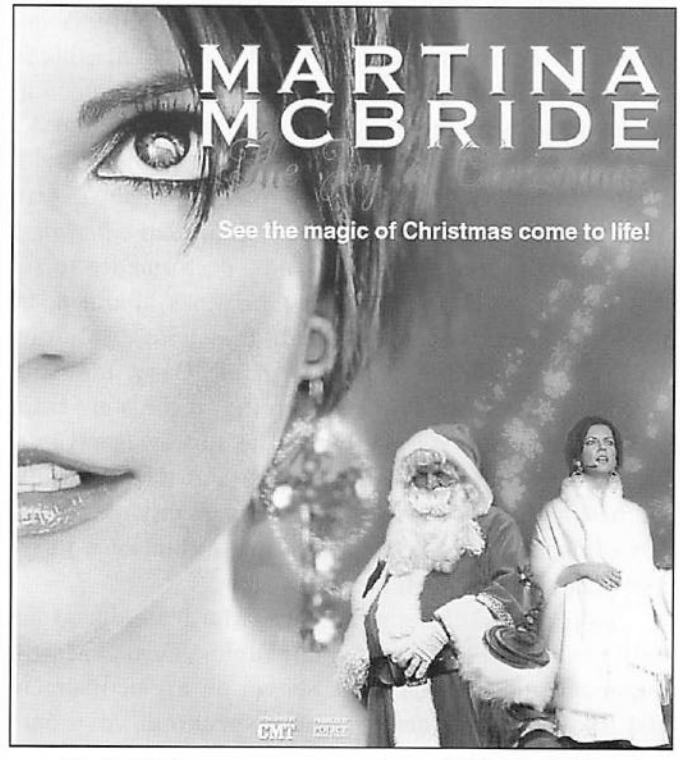
PEBBLE BEACH, Calif.—John Mallinger was on the wrong course at the right time, starting so early that he dodged the worst of the wind along the ocean holes on his way to a 7-under 65 and a share of the lead yesterday in the Pebble Beach Pro-Am. **It was a return of the miserable conditions - cold, damp, windy - known in these parts as "Crosby" weather from when Bing Crosby was the tournament host.** And everyone knows that when the wind is up, Pebble Beach is the worst place to be.

Malcolm Macfarlane

A Christmas Surprise for Martina McBride

Greg Van Beek meets another Bing fan.

The name Martina McBride is one that may not be known to ICC members outside of the United States, but here, she's a quite popular and highly acclaimed country music performer. She has been wowing audiences and critics alike with her amazing soprano voice since she burst on the country scene in the early 1990's. Over the last decade, she has sold over 16 million albums, garnered 20 top 10 hits including nine #1s and received numerous awards, including the Country Music Association's Female Vocalist of the year award for four years.



Each Christmas season since 2002, Martina has toured the US with an extravagant and elaborate production titled *The Joy of Christmas.* This show is

more than a concert, it's a two-hour multimedia event with elaborate sets, impressive special effects, and a talented cast of actors that complement McBride's powerful voice, which is accompanied by a full orchestra and choir. This amazing production features 18 Christmas classics, many of which can be found on Martina's platinum-selling *White Christmas* album. As executive producer Bud Schaetzle in the press release for the tour explains, "One minute you're in a quaint village underneath a Christmas tree; the next minute you're in Bethlehem crossing the desert, and the next, you have a World War II, Bob Hope/Bing Crosby vibe. The centerpiece, of course, is McBride and her music."

The production is divided into four Acts: The Spirit of Christmas, The Joy of Christmas, The Memories of Christmas, and The Meaning of Christmas. Indeed, during The Memories of Christmas segment, a "Bing Crosby vibe" can definitely be felt. During a costume / set change, scenes from classic Christmas films and television programs are shown on huge video screens on stage. Among the clips shown are scenes from Bing's 1954 film *White Christmas*. During the song "I'll Be Home for Christmas", WW2 newsreels are shown, along with coming attractions trailers for movies of that era. During the fifteen-minute intermission halfway through the show, Christmas music by Sinatra, Elvis, et al was played through the impressive arena sound system. As if on cue, as I walked back into the arena after checking out the merchandise that was available for sale in the lobby, Bing's 1952 Decca recording of "Sleigh Ride" began to play. It was especially rewarding, knowing Bing had an audience of close to 10,000 people that night!

For her closing number, Martina delivers an incredible a capella rendition of "O Holy Night" that is so powerful in its beauty and intensity it's guaranteed to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end!

New to the show this year was a performance with Dean Martin! Capitol Records released a new Dean Martin Christmas CD in October, 2006 titled *Christmas With Dino*. The label wanted a new performance to set this reissue of Dean's popular Christmas album apart from previous issues. For that, they chose Martina McBride to record the female part of "Baby, It's Cold Outside" onto Dean's 1959 recording of the song from his A *Winter Romance* album. The tune was given a brassy new arrangement by the Patrick Williams Orchestra. The result is stunning. The quality of the two recordings matches perfectly, giving no hint of a forty-five year span between the two vocals.

To perform the song on stage, Martina enlisted the help of credible and believable Dean Martin impersonator Andy DiMino, shown on a video screen. His likeness, mannerisms and speaking voice are amazingly accurate, though he (wisely) chose to lip-synch to Dean's part of the recording for the duet. As Martina remarked while introducing the song "I recorded my part of the song in the same Capitol Studio A where Dean recorded his part many years ago, and I could almost feel his presence standing behind me as I sang."

This was the third year I'd attended the performance of *The Joy of Christmas* in Milwaukee, where it always sells out huge arenas. This year, it was held at the Bradley Center, home of the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team. When Santa appeared on stage and asked Martina what she wanted for Christmas, she remarked "for the Bucks to win the championship", to which Santa quipped "Well I'll see what I can do, but remember I'm Santa, not Jesus!"

Through some fortunate circumstances, I was able to obtain an invite into the VIP room backstage to meet Martina prior to the Milwaukee performance on Sunday, December 3, 2006. Having some advance notice of this, I decided to see if I could enlist the help of our honorary President Kathryn Crosby to give Martina a unique gift during my visit with her. I sent Mrs. Crosby a copy of Martina's Christmas album, along with some information about her Christmas tour, and asked her if she could give it a listen and let me know what she thought. Well, Mrs. Crosby thought the album was very well done, and preceded to send me a handwritten note to give to Martina, along with sealed copies of Bing's classic "White Christmas" CD and the new Capitol "Bing Crosby Christmas Classics" CD for her as a gift. The note from Mrs. Crosby read as follows:

To Martina, All good wishes for your production of The Joy of Christmas. Greg sent me your wonderful Christmas album. He knows talent! Love, Kathryn.

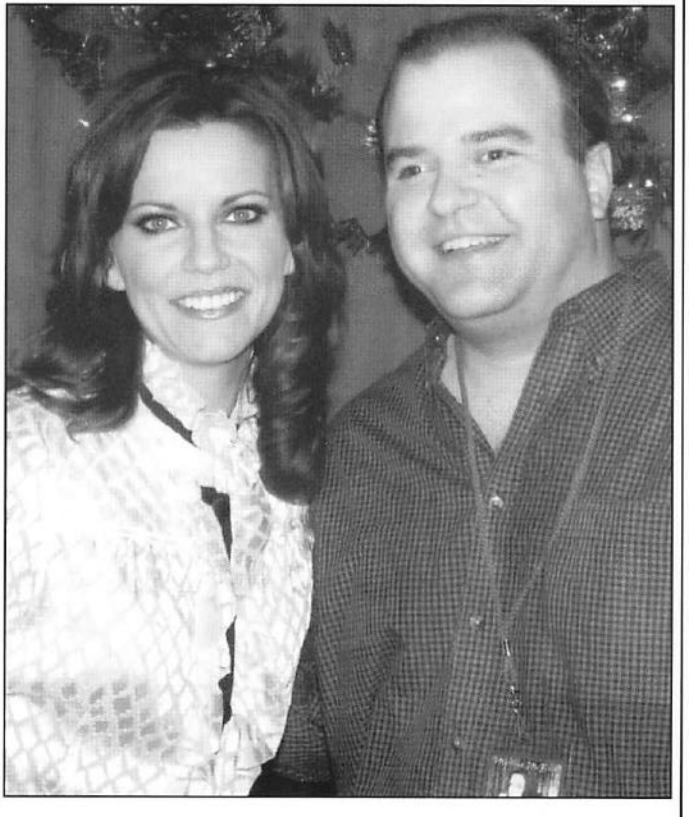
The card featured a wonderful scene of a rabbit frolicking in the snow, and was painted by Mrs. Crosby herself, proving yet another of her many talents.

It was a bitterly cold Sunday evening when I headed to the Bradley Center. The Will Call window, where I had to pick up my tickets and VIP access pass, is at the complete opposite end of the Bradley Center from the parking structure. Needless to say, with temperatures hovering around nine degrees, the walk around the outside perimeter of the building was done at a brisk pace! The concert was to begin at 7:30pm, and I had to meet with the tour manager at 6:50pm, at which time he escorted me to the backstage VIP room, along with a dozen to fifteen others. The room was almost totally dark. It was beautifully decorated, illuminated solely by candles and a large Christmas tree. There was a red velvet curtain mounted on the far wall with a huge wreath over it. Standing in the middle of the room facing the curtain was a camera mounted on a tripod. Cameras were not permitted in the arena or backstage area, so the tour manager took photos of everyone with Martina backstage.

It was just after 7pm when Martina McBride was finally ushered into the room. I was immediately struck by two things; how incredibly beautiful she is and how

incredibly tiny she is! I was about halfway back in the line waiting my turn to meet her, so I had a chance to observe some of the others interacting with her. More often than not, grown men, who had been conversing with ease prior to Martina entering the room, were reduced to head nodding when standing face to face with her. Words wouldn't come; they were so taken with her beauty, and the fact that they were meeting a "big star". Thankfully, my voice didn't fail me when it came around to my turn. We shook hands and I introduced myself, adding how much I've enjoyed her work over the years. She thanked me and kindly signed a photo I had brought with me, along with a glass Christmas tree ornament adorned with her *Joy of Christmas* tour logo that was given to me as a gift from the tour manager prior to her entering the room.

As she was signing the ornament, I told her I had brought along a gift for her which "I guarantee is something no one has ever given to you before at a meet and greet." She perked right up when I said this, flashing me a big smile, and after I had her full attention, I asked her if she remembered the singer Bing Crosby. She replied, "Of course I do, he's great." I mentioned that I'm the American Co-Editor of this fine publication, and how I've become acquainted with Mrs. Bing Crosby. She seemed genuinely interested, and I told her I sent Mrs. Crosby a copy of her Christmas album, and that she enjoyed it a great deal. So much so, I said, that she sent along a note for me to give to you, along with a couple of Bing's Christmas albums. Martina enthusiastically exclaimed "Well ALRIGHT!!" and thanked me profusely as she took them from me.



Greg meets Martina McBride.

I included a Christmas card from me inside the envelope with Mrs. Crosby's card (an appropriate 'White Christmas' movie-themed card), which contained my contact information, along with details of some of the television programs I've worked on during the past five years involving Bing. I mentioned to her how much I enjoyed the new duet with Dean Martin, for which she thanked me. I also told her that if she ever had a desire to make Bing a part of one of her future *Joy of Christmas* tours she should feel free to have her producer contact me, as I could help them find suitable footage, and could also put them in touch with the Crosby family attorney. She said, "I'll do that", and thanked me again. With that, I set down the photo and ornament to pose for a photograph with Martina, which is reproduced here. I must explain the rope hanging askew around my neck. This is not a leash, but the VIP access pass I was required to wear for security purposes backstage.

Each of us only had two or three minutes with her at the most. We were out of the VIP room and in our seats in the arena by 7:20pm. But it was truly a magical night. It was a genuine pleasure to meet this talented performer, and even more of a pleasure to see her expression after being surprised by a Christmas gift from Mrs. Bing Crosby! My thanks and gratitude goes out to Mrs. Crosby for her generosity. I'm certainly not holding my breath that anyone will contact me wanting to make Bing a part of Martina's *Joy of Christmas* show in the future, but you never know!

For those ICC members here in the United States, be sure to watch for this tour coming to a city near you for Christmas 2007. I highly recommend it to each and every one. If you have small children or grandchildren, bring them along, as Martina invites all of the kids from the audience she can fit on stage with her when Santa Claus appears! It's truly a great "family atmosphere" show that all generations can appreciate.

Greg Van Beek

The Dedication of the Bing Crosby Theater, Spokane, Washington

Stephanie Plowman, Crosby Curator, Gonzaga University was there and sends her special report.

On December 8, 2006 the Met Theater in Spokane, Washington was renamed the Bing Crosby Theater. This was a historic event as Spokane finally recognized Bing Crosby and the fact that the theater was where Bing honed his act prior to leaving for stardom. Kathryn Crosby performed her "My Life with Bing" act as a fundraiser that night to raise funds for the new marquee sign.

The name change suggestion came from an Eastern Washington University journalism professor, Bill Stimson. After receiving support for the idea from the

theater's owner, Mr. Stimson formed the Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater (ABCT). I was fortunate to be the Gonzaga representative on the ABCT board. We planned and promoted this gala dedication. Afterwards, we were so thrilled and relieved that it was so successful. Prior to the event, we were very concerned that there would be low ticket sales and that we would not raise the money needed to buy the new marquee sign. Our worries did not come to fruition as we had over 600 people attend and we raised enough funds for the sign.

This event was a lot of work, but fun. We had great media coverage before the event to promote it. Through arrangements with the host hotel, the Davenport, I was able to ride in the town car to pick up Mrs. Crosby at the airport right on the tarmac next to the plane. We did not go through the airport, but were able to whisk her and her entourage off after collecting their luggage.

On the day of the dedication, *Going My Way*, *Road to Morocco*, and *White Christmas* were shown free of charge in the theater. The movies were well attended even though it was a Friday afternoon. We had so many people attend the dedication in the lobby that people were spilling out onto the sidewalk and they could not see or hear. We never dreamed that so many people would attend this dedication an hour before Kathryn's show. The dedication was filmed and aired that weekend on Charles Kuralt's "Sunday Morning" television show.

Kathryn Crosby's show was fantastic. She used a mix of video and photographs on the screen behind her. It felt like Bing himself was also performing on stage with her. There were people moved to tears with her performance. I was fortunate to escort her to her book signings at the Davenport Hotel and in the theater lobby after her show. I was impressed how gracious she was to her visitors. She appeared to enjoy her Spokane visit.

Gonzaga played a role in this historic event. I put up four display cases of material from GU's Crosby Collection in the Davenport Hotel in November to promote the event. Gonzaga also loaned the theater items to put on display its lobby and another room, as well as 12 large poster sized images of Bing. Bing's Oscar and the platinum record for *White Christmas* were loaned for the day. Summer Berry, Gonzaga's theater costumer, volunteered to make the 4 usher costumes that were from designed from the 40s: red jackets and red pill box hats. The 4 student volunteers looked great. Prior to Kathryn's performance, the 'Big Bing Theory' performed Christmas music in the lobby. This is an a capella group of Gonzaga students that has been organized since 2000. They wore 1940s costumes on loan from the GU theater department.

Stephanie Plowman and Kathryn at the book signing

Just last month, the Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater decided on a sign company to make the new marquee. It will take about 8 weeks before the new sign is completed. We are now planning on the dedication of this new marquee.

It warms my heart when I see events now advertised in the newspaper to be performed in the Bing Crosby Theater. It is nice to know that Bing is finally recognized by Spokane. I kept telling the media prior to the show that it was about time that Spokane recognizedits most famous citizen. Bing did so much for the city and Gonzaga while he was alive and it is most appropriate that the city finally does something to honor him. I was thrilled to be a part of this grand and historic event.

Stephanie Plowman

(Editor: Thanks Stephanie for all your hard work with this very worthwhile endeavour which will certainly help to perpetuate Bing's name. Kathryn Crosby's show is being well received wherever she appears. She's been in Minneapolis and New York too.)

Kathryn Crosby in Minneapolis

Arne Fogel reports.

I guess this is a little late, and due to time constraints a little short, but I must tell you all that Kathryn Crosby had a very successful visit here to Minneapolis on December 10th. She appeared in tandem with screenings of *White Christmas* at the Heights Theater, a wonderful 80-year-old house that plays current features but often does revivals as well. They have a beautiful theater organ which was played at the opening of her show, after which Bob De Flores introduced a series of rare Kathryn film clips.

Then, Kathryn came up to the stage to thunderous applause, and presented her beautiful autobiographical cabaret act, complete with music and power-point presentation. Rick Carlson served as her accompanist, and Maud Hixson served as pinch-singer to assist in the vocal department on two tunes. All other songs were handled in engaging (and sometimes dramatic) fashion by Kathryn herself. The presentation on screen consisted of Bing rarities, family films and pictures, excerpts from TV specials, etc....

Kathryn's monologue was poignant, funny, revealing, and always interesting. Both houses were turn-away sellouts, and the people received Kathryn with great joy and near-reverence. It was a thrill to be there and be a part of the happenings, all of which were very much Bing-oriented and a thrill for any Crosby (Bing OR Kathryn) fan.

Kathryn will be doing more and more of these shows, and I strongly recommend the experience.

Arne Fogel

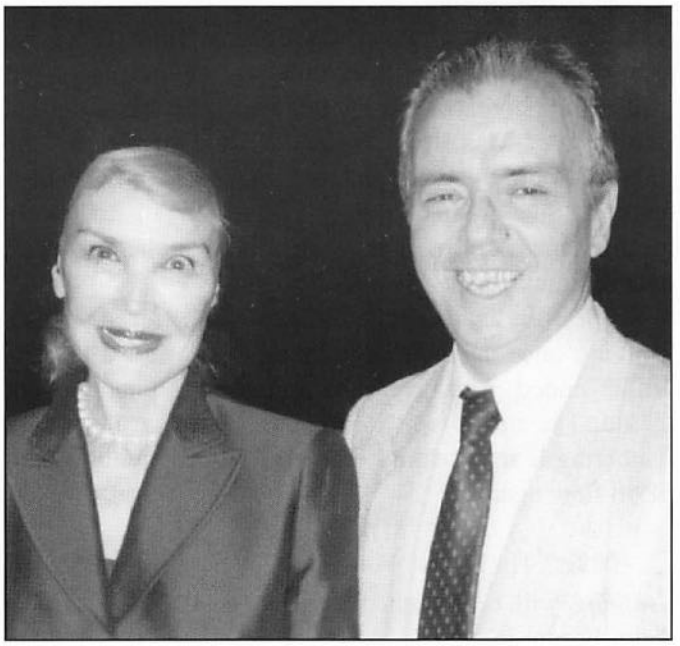
Charming Knickerbockers: High Society in New York

The *High Society* 50th anniversary celebration which began in August, 2006 in Newport, Rhode Island (see BING #144) concluded in October in New York City when The Museum of Modern Art and The Player's Club hosted commemorative screenings of what many consider to be Bing Crosby's last great musical film.

Laurence Kardish, Senior Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Department of Film and Media agreed in May to my suggestion that *High Society* be honored on the occasion of its demi-centennial. Mrs. Kathryn Crosby most graciously consented to participate. It was arranged that the special screening take place while she would be in New York for her Hofstra University show. (I extended invitations to both HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco and Celeste Holm. Alas, both were unable to attend.) The date was set for Wednesday, Oct. 18th at 6:30 p.m. The Museum's October calendar listing read as follows:

> Kathryn Crosby, Bing Crosby's widow, is also fondly remembered as the actress Kathryn Grant. She returns to New York with her one-woman multimedia show "Kathryn Crosby Remembers Bing." On October 18, Crosby will introduce her husband's favorite film, *High Society*, fifty years after its first release. Cole Porter's MGM musical was one of the most eagerly awaited films of 1956, reuniting (after 1954's *The Country Girl*) Bing Crosby with Grace Kelly—who had announced her engagement to Prince Rainier of Monaco and imminent retirement from the screen.
>
> "What a swell party this is!" New 35mm print courtesy George Eastman House. 104 min.

The theater was just about filled to capacity on this marvelous autumn night. The Vista Vision print was magnificent to behold. Mrs. Crosby, dressed in a striking red silk two piece suit, was overjoyed to see the film in this deluxe context, and her excitement was palpable. It was an extraordinary thrill to share this emotional experience with her. During the 'Now You Has Jazz' number, she turned to me and remarked that the baroque piano used in the scene now sits in the Crosby home in Hillsborough.



Mrs. Crosby and Martin at the Museum of Modern Art.

After the screening, Mr. Kardish invited Mrs. Crosby to the stage, from which she expressed her gratitude to the enthusiastic audience, and spoke of the cherished memories involved with *High Society*. She commented on the witty script, and observed, Celeste Holm has all the best lines!

She answered several questions. One from this reporter triggered happy reminiscences of a Crosby family visit in the early sixties to Monaco (also reported in BING #144). Mrs. Crosby beamed as she recalled her

children cavorting with the young prince and princesses, and wryly recollected the embrace which Bing and Grace Kelly gave each other as they met. They were locked in each other's arms and no one else seemed to matter!

On Sunday, October 22nd, The Players in Gramercy Park followed suit with a *High Society* luncheon and screening. John Martello, executive director of this esteemed actors' club, agreed to my recommendation that the film be honored where two previous Crosby tributes were recently held. (A centennial tribute took place in 2003, and a salute to Bing Crosby's relationship to New York was organized by me in 2005.)

The afternoon began with a cocktail hour in the anteroom adorned with paintings of the club's illustrious members (Bing was a member of the Players.). At this time Mrs. Crosby offered special gifts to the guests: autographed copies of *My Life with Bing* and *My Last Years with Bing*.

The festivities continued in the great hall, where Mrs. Crosby sang a wistful rendition of "White Christmas". She was given splendid piano accompaniment by Joseph Klein who served as a kind of personal coach to the Crosby family for the Christmas 1966 *Hollywood Palace*. Two of Mr. Klein's students joined in the singing.

Another special guest was Celeste Holm. It was so gratifying that the last surviving star of the film could accept my invitation to attend. Radiant, charming and most agile, Ms. Holm regaled Mrs. Crosby and the others at our table with amusing anecdotes of her fabled career. She treated those assembled to a lovely performance of 'True Love', blending with her husband, singer Frank Basile.

The film again elicited a warm, heartfelt response, proving once again what a timeless treasure it is. The affair ended with everyone mingling on an elegant cloud. The magic which Bing weaves in a New York gathering is intoxicating indeed. I hope the bubbly will soon flow again.

****

Note: The wait won't be too long. *Double or Nothing* will be screened on March 31st, 2007 at The Film Forum in New York. It will be shown on a double bill with an Eddie Bracken film *Sweater Girl* as part of a "B" musical series, although I can't understand how any Crosby movie can be classified as "B".

****

On another matter: Lauren Ashley Brookmeyer, an undergraduate student studying media at Hofstra University, chose to profile Bing for her class thesis. She interviewed both Mrs. Crosby and me after Mrs. Crosby's recent show at Hofstra University. Lauren also called upon me for background research. The tribute has been aired multiple times on the university's radio station, and it will be submitted for several awards this summer and fall, including the 2007 Hearst Awards. Good Luck, Lauren!

****

A sad note: My mother, Theresa McQuade, died on Sunday, February 11th. She was ninety-two. As reported in *A Star Grows in Brooklyn* (BING #143), she saw Bing perform in 1932 at The Brooklyn Paramount. This occasion resulted in a life-long love for Bing. She was a kind and noble lady and will be enormously missed.

Martin McQuade

(Editor: Many thanks for your report, Martin. I'm sure I speak for all members in sending sincere condolences on the loss of your mother.)

Common Threads: Bing and Willie Nelson

Crissi Newton finds some common threads between some unlikely bedfellows.

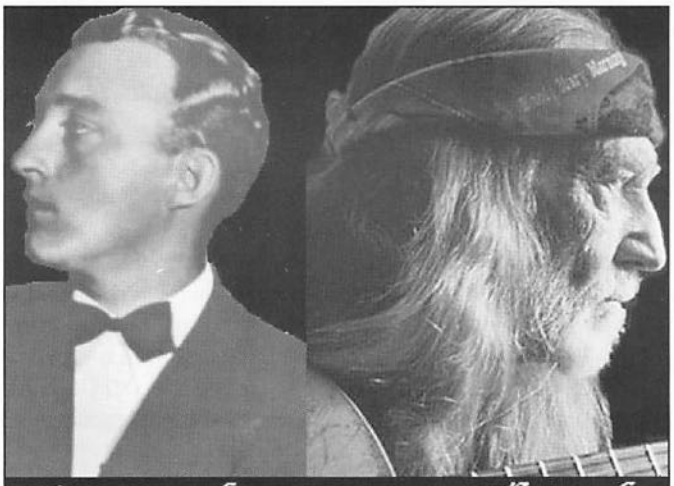
As the oppressive heat of summer finally gave way to a crisp Louisiana fall, it seemed like business as usual at the Medicaid office. For those of you lucky enough to be unfamiliar with the program, Medicaid is a state-funded health care plan for those unable to afford private insurance. So, my co-workers and I had spent a long morning certifying or rejecting people for the various programs that comprise the Medicaid system. We had just settled down at the lunch table when Lori, one of my co-workers, found an article of interest in our local paper. In small print under the entertainment section, there was the announcement: Willie Nelson live at Rabb's Steak House in Ruston, Louisiana, a college town about 2 hours away.

Knowing that Willie was in his 70s and, let's just say, well aware of his not-so-healthy lifestyle; Lori thought this to be the perfect, and perhaps last, opportunity to see Willie perform live and in person. After a quick go-round the lunch table, it was decided that only Lori and myself were up for the trip. With that, I was off to the computer to purchase our tickets.

At this point, you may be wondering why the hippie, dippy, "red headed stranger" would even be mentioned in BING, but as it turns out, Nelson and Crosby are not so different after all. Both came from small towns and from families who were familiar with hard times; Crosby from Spokane, Washington, and Nelson, born 30 years after Crosby, from the tiny town of Abbot, Texas. Both demonstrated their musical abilities early in life, along with their siblings. These abilities led them away from home and family; one to great success with the Rhythm Boys until the team bombed in New York, and the other found success in Nashville as a songwriter until he wanted to lend his unique voice to the many songs that he had written. And, of course, regardless of these set-backs, both went on to become American icons.

While it is doubtful that Nelson was even a blip on Crosby's radar screen, Nelson had been, seemingly,

keeping a keen eye on Bing's career. Willie has shown his respect and admiration for Bing through his intimate vocal style, engaging a jazzy improvisation reminiscent of the young Crosby, and with his song choices. In 1978, the latter was demonstrated with the release of "Stardust." Much to the indignation of his record label, "Stardust," a compilation of pop standards, was a departure from Nelson's finely honed and now popular sound. It has been reported that the idea to record "Stardust" came from the death of Bing in October, 1977.



Bing Crosby: Common Threads

Armed with this knowledge, I devised a plan to introduce Mr. Nelson to the International Club Crosby and to leave him with a lasting souvenir of his visit to Ruston. It was not difficult to come up with around 12 songs of Bing's to include on Willie's CD that I entitled "Common Threads." The only criterion was that the song had to have been recorded by both men. I began with the obvious, "Blue Skies," "Georgia On My Mind," and Bing's recording of Nelson's "Hello Walls." Moving on to the more obscure, I included "Mona Lisa," "Harbor Lights," "Ole Buttermilk Sky," "Moonlight Becomes You," and "San Antonio Rose." A few more songs to round out the collection, a computer generated CD cover, and a copy of the latest issue of BING topped off the project.

The evening of October 27, 2005, found Lori and me standing in line amongst a menagerie of characters. The large crowd included bikers clad in black leather, left over hippies from decades past, college kids clutching their Dixie cups of beer, and several representatives from the geriatric set, among others. The venue, Rabb's Steak House, turned out to be an intimate outdoor area, reminiscent of a rodeo arena without seating, attached to the back of the restaurant. Lori and I found a spot on a riser close to the stage to prop ourselves against and attempted to shield ourselves from the cold winds that had descended from the north only a few days before. In my gloved hands, I held the package.

I began looking, searching for someone of authority to pass the CD and the BING issue on to Willie. There were many people milling around the stage area and around the door that led to the inside of the steak house. One fellow, in particular, caught my eye. He was a big guy, tall and round, and wore a local radio station shirt and a placard around his neck. I told Lori, "He looks like someone I need to talk to." And, with that, I made my approach.

He looked at me with an interested expression that was part dumb-founded and part amazed. I succinctly told him my story, how Willie recorded many of the same songs as Bing and how I would love to have the package delivered to Mr. Nelson. I held it out and he took it with a grin. He replied, "I'll see what I can do." The big man disappeared into the steak house and emerged about ten minutes later, scanning the crowd. We had not left our spots so he was able to find me while the opening act was playing. He yelled above the crowd, "I gave it to the harmonica player. He's going to give it to Poodie, the road manager, and he'll give it to Willie." I thanked him for his help and kindness and faded back into the sea of concert-goers, wondering just how reliable a man named Poodie could be.

The concert, despite the crowd, the cold, and a lack of seats, was excellent. Nelson played and sang for nearly 2 hours despite the conditions and his 73 years of living. I never did hear from the red-headed stranger, so I can never be sure if the packet reached the singer, or not. I can imagine, though, that Willie climbed aboard his tour bus, "Honey Suckle Rose" that night and popped the CD into his player. And, as the bus left the college town of Ruston, in a plume of exhaust, and quite likely, a plume of smoke of a different nature from inside the bus, Willie was settling in for a long ride with his issue of BING and enjoying the mellow voice of one of his influences.

Crissi Newton

(Editor: Thanks Crissi. Incidentally, Crissi maintains a most impressive web site at:

http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/3754/bing.html

It's well worth a look.)

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $16.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $18.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Malcolm Macfarlane, address on inside front cover.

I am helping Joyce Pairpoint, (Lionel's widow) dispose of the residue of his collection and at present I have several hundred audio cassettes and a good number of video cassettes stored in my garage. Amongst the audio cassettes are the following:

43 Golden Age cassettes including 58 KMH shows from the 1940s, 4 tapes of Ford Road shows, plus Lux Radio Theatre and Screen Guild Players presentations.

42 C90 cassettes titled "Bing – From First to Last" containing Bing's commercial recordings from 1926 to 14/11/46

40 C90 cassettes labelled Kraft Music Hall songs

30 C90 cassettes containing Bing's Chesterfield shows from 21/9/49 to 21/3/51.

25 C90 cassettes containing all 75 of Bing's shows for GE.

12 C90 cassettes containing Bing and Buddy Cole material from the CBS shows.

7 C120 cassettes containing the 1973 BBC radio series BING plus an extra cassette picking up the additional broadcasts added in 1979.

7 C60 cassettes containing selected recordings by Bing from 1934 to 1954.

Fascinating stuff and it could all be yours for £75 if you can pick it up from my home.

In addition, Joyce still has many books relating to our kind of music and I can supply a list if any one is interested.

John Marshall, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0QD, UK (e-mail: carson1812@blueyonder.co.uk)

John has been busy scouring the Internet and other sources for rare video extracts and he has put together a DVD containing 6 hours of this musical material. Bing is there as are Perry Como, Dean Martin, Dinah Shore, Guy Mitchell, Mario Lanza, Jimmy Durante, Andy Williams and many, many others. This is certainly not hi-fi and the quality varies with the source. Often the sound does not quite synchronise with the picture on these rare extracts, but, after a few minutes you don't notice and it really is a fascinating collection of nostalgia. The DVD is called "The Footloose Follies" and the cost is £15 plus £1 p & p. (See also *Keeping Track*). (PAL format only).

Mrs. Hazel Moore, 1 Elm Grove, South Shields NE34 8AZ, UK (Tel: 0191 456 2207)

FOR SALE

Mrs. Moore is having to dispose of her late husband's collection and she offers much Bing memorabilia including a porcelain bust (pictured), a glass paper weight, framed sheet music, books, 150 LPs, 80 CDs, 70 cassettes, Crosby magazines and newspaper cuttings. Contact Mrs. Moore for prices.

Stan Pearson, 12 Crouchman's Avenue, Great Wakering, Essex SS3 0DQ, UK (Tel: 01702 218254)

Stan's father, Ron Pearson, died in November and Stan would like to pass on the vast number of Crosby magazines he had received over the years. No charge but those interested would have to collect unless willing to pay postage.

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR, UK (Tel: 0121-359-7399, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs (and LPs) contact Ray.

Redmond Nostalgia Company, P O Box 82, Redmond, WA 98073-0082, USA. (Tel: (425) 774-1819, Fax (425) 774-8076, web site: http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/

e-mail: redmondnostalgia@aol.com)

David Kiner offers a comprehensive list of 361 Bing Crosby CDs. Each CD is one hour long containing two 30 minute radio programs, unless otherwise noted. All programs have been professionally re-mastered for excellent sound quality. All CDs are professionally printed and come sealed in cases with printed inserts.

See the company's web site for details of what is available.

Greg Van Beek, address on inside front cover.

"I'm trying to complete two series of LP's for my Crosby collection. I'm looking for the actual LP records (not a tape or CD copy) of the following: Spokane label #24, #29, #31. Limited Edition Club label # JGB 1003."

Anyone who can help, please contact Greg direct.

Barry Whittingham, 25c Garton Close, Cinderhill, Nottingham NG6 8RZ, UK
(email: barry.whittingham@ntlworld.com)

Barry has prepared an interesting 4-CD set called "Whistle And Dream Your Cares Away" which is nicely packaged in a 4-way DVD box. The set contains 84 songs in which Bing whistles (excluding songs from the sing-along albums). Price (including p & p) is £20.00 in the UK, £21.00 in Europe and £22.00 to the USA and Australia.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net –

website:
www.geocities.com/one_sonoma_rose/BingsHomePage.html

The Australian Bing Crosby Club (formerly The Victorian Bing Crosby Society)

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby

A wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/3754/bing.html

This is a most impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

www.BingCrosby.com

The site is being launched this year by the Crosby family under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner.

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune)
Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £18 for the UK, £22 for Europe and £32.50 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch and his excellent Great Song Stylists website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website:

http://homepages.tesco.net/flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743,
website: www.sinatra-ms.com/Sinatra.html)

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

Hark! Festive missives sing, as high-tech cards catch on

Norman Wolfe was one of several members who told me about a new type of Christmas card. He writes:

"I just received a Christmas card from a friend. Maybe you've seen it before, but it's new to me. It features a color picture from "White Christmas" of Bing, Rosemary, Danny and Vera with the words "Joy, Music, Love, Laughter." When opened, it reads, "Wishing you the kind of Christmas you've always dreamed of" and Bing sings, "I'm Dreaming of a white Christmas just like the one's I used to know." (It's a Hallmark card with a chip and a tiny speaker.) I could not have been more pleased. (I still have, and prize, the Bing Crosby animated, singing Santa doll, with microphone, given to me for Christmas by one of my daughters a few years ago.) It's going to be a very merry Christmas!"

Norman Wolfe

I noticed from the Hallmark web site that they also offer a card of Bing singing "It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas". Further background information was given by Nick Marino writing in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on December 18 as follows:

Americans send about 7 billion greeting cards a year, 2 billion of them during the holiday season, according to the Greeting Card Association, a Washington trade group. To help feed this postal frenzy, Hallmark is offering unique cards with music inside. But if you want to send one, hurry: You have only a couple of days to mail them before Christmas.

BACKGROUND: A few sound cards emerged in 2005, but the big rollout occurred in July of this year. Hallmark now has 223 general sound cards and 45 holiday-themed sound cards.

HOW THEY WORK: A tiny battery-operated speaker, buried inside the card, is designed to play at least 200 times. The sound clips, which generally run under 30 seconds, are stored as a WAV file, similar to an MP3, on a sound chip. The speaker activates when the card is opened.

QUOTE: "When you open it up, you get right to the meat of what you want to say, and you're not going to clip a part of the song that nobody's going to recognize." — Joan Orth, art director.

COST: The cards retail for $4.99 each. "They are more expensive to produce than other cards," Orth says. "However, their price value, I think, is spectacular."

ARE THEY SUCCESSFUL? According to spokeswoman Deidre Parkes, privately held Hallmark doesn't release sales figures for individual card lines, but Orth says sound cards are "definitely not a niche."

THE HARD PART: Licensing — getting permission to use the songs — is "the giant hairball" in the operation, Orth says. The process can be expensive and time-consuming, much as it would be to use the song in a

movie or TV commercial. But so far Hallmark has secured the rights to use songs by such heavyweights as James Brown and Louis Armstrong, plus the movies *Mommie Dearest* and *Napoleon Dynamite.*

WHO'S NO. 1? The most popular sound card plays George Thorogood's "Bad to the Bone."

ON THE HORIZON: Future plans, Orth says, include a stronger gospel music presence and more attention to the youth market.

COMPANY HISTORY: Hallmark, a $4.2 billion company based in Kansas City, Mo., traces the history of Christmas cards to Englishman Henry Cole, who sent the first batch in 1843. Hallmark started selling its Christmas cards 72 years later, and the company now calls Christmas "the largest card-sending holiday in the United States, with approximately 2 billion cards sent to friends and loved ones every year."

MORE THAN CARDS: The sound cards aren't Hallmark's only musical offering; the company has joined Starbucks and other nontraditional music retailers in selling CDs. This year, George Strait's holiday album "Fresh Cut Christmas" is being sold exclusively at Hallmark Gold Crown stores, just as Michael McDonald's and James Taylor's discs were in 2005 and 2004.

Nick Marino

Books 'n' Bing

1. If I Don't Write It, Nobody Else Will

By Eric Sykes, published by Harper Perennial. ISBN: 13-978-0-00-717785-1, paperback, 502 pages, £7.99

The name of Eric Sykes is well known in the UK but may not be familiar to those overseas. Eric (now 83) is a much-loved comedian and writer who has also played many interesting bit parts in major films over the years. He played Frank Bryce in *Harry Potter and The Goblet Of Fire* (2005) and he was seen in *The Others* with Nicole Kidman in 2001, *Monte Carlo Or Bust* (1969), *Shalako* (1968) and *The Liquidator* (1965) amongst many others. His autobiography is of particular interest to readers of BING magazine because of its many mentions of our man.

When Eric left school, he started work as a storekeeper at Rutland Mill in Oldham, Lancs. But let's allow him tell the story.

"One morning I was chatting away to a couple of big piecers who were eulogising about Bing Crosby. My face lit up: Bing was my idol too. Spotting a bucket resting aimlessly in the corner, I picked it up, stuck my head in it and sang 'When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day'. I finished off the song with a 'boo boo deo voihm' and when I lowered the bucket the couple of lads were now a dozen, obviously impressed by my rendering. With smiles all round, and like a seasoned artiste, I left them wanting more. Some of them started to call me 'Bing' and from then on there was always a bucket handy when I went up into the mule room. I vocalised other Bing offerings but the favourite was 'When The Blue of the Night'.

The bubble had to burst. Some of the big piecers were leaving their machines to gather round when I put my head in the bucket. I was in particularly good voice one morning and I finished up with the usual 'deo voihm', but when I took the bucket from my face the audience was not what I expected: it was the manager himself, all thin, six feet two of him. I attempted a sickly smile but he was unmoved. Either he didn't like Bing Crosby or in the last few weeks production at the mill had dropped disastrously. The manager, who must have been in his seventies, spoke in a quavering voice, but as always he was economical with his words. 'Get your cards,' he said, and he left the mule room. I looked round but all my new found friends were frantically busy at their machines.

This was the second time I'd been sacked from the Rutland Mill but I'd learned the lesson from my first dismissal. I ignored it and continued to be the storekeeper."

Eric continues to mention his impressions of Bing as he uses them to charm various girls and then years later in 1976, he meets his hero when they record an *International Pro-Celebrity Golf* BBC-TV programme on the King's Course at Gleneagles in Scotland.

"The dinner in the evening is the main thrust of this narrative. It was both magical and illuminating. The cocktail party preceding the banquet was a noisy crowded affair. I was spellbound — so many familiar faces I'd only ever seen from a seat in the cinema. I couldn't help thinking that if a bomb were to drop on this assembly the world be much a much poorer place. I'd met Bing Crosby once before at Coombe Hill Golf Club, but when he came over to shake my hand I was surprised and delighted that he even remembered my name. We exchanged pleasantries and I was just about to mention how I used to impersonate him in a bucket when he introduced me to Phil Harris, a man I had idolised over the years . . ."

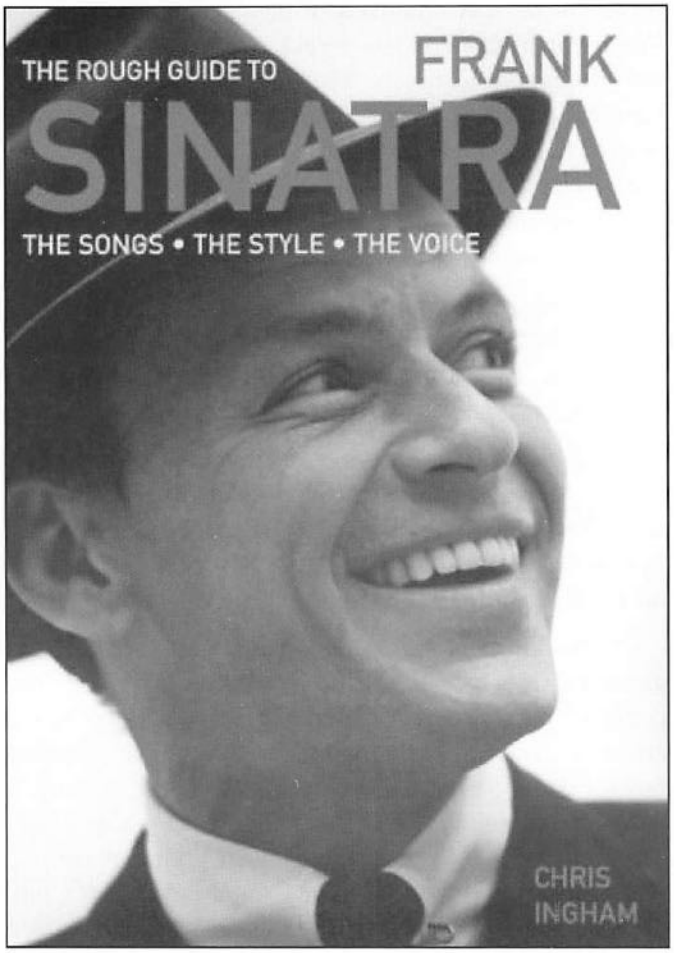
2.The Rough Guide To Frank Sinatra

By Chris Ingham, published by Rough Guides Ltd. ISBN: 1843534142, 400 pages, paperback. £7.99

Frank Startup mentions this book in the *One Sweet Letter* section. It is one of the Rough Guides series which covers many travel destinations as well as diverse subjects such as iPods and Elvis Presley. The book contains a comparison of Bing and Frank and we have pleasure in reproducing this here. Members' views will be appreciated.

CROSBY vs SINATRA

Bing Crosby was, along with Louis Armstrong, one of the fathers of jazz-influenced singing. Broadly in the mould of crooners such as Rudy Vallee and Russ Columbo but with the rhythmic panache of a jazzman, in the 1930s "the Old Groaner", as he was sometimes affectionately known, was the biggest singing star in America; and the young Sinatra, like the rest of the country, was charmed by his many radio appearances and his apparently ultra-relaxed way with a song. When, as a nineteen-year-old, Frank saw Crosby in person – and the brouhaha that seemed to accompany being a music star – he knew that he had to be a singer.



In his early years he made particular efforts not to sound like him – "every kid on the block was boo-boo-booing like Crosby," he said – with the result that there were as many differences between them as there were similarities. Although Sinatra soon achieved Crosby's warmth of tone – especially on his Columbia recordings of the 1940s – he rarely matched Bing's relaxed style. This is clear if his 1941 recording of "You Lucky People You" is compared with Crosby's performance of the song on the soundtrack to the film *Road To Zanzibar*. Where Sinatra makes relatively heavy weather of Jimmy Van Heusen's elaborate little melody – pulling away from the beat to make sense of the phrasing – Crosby breezes through the line with insouciant swing and makes perfect sense. Sinatra would learn later to relax on rhythmic lines, but even then his swing remained edgier than Crosby's. "I believed because of [Crosby's] leisurely manner of working, that if he could do it, I could do it," Sinatra said in the mid-1950s. "The funny switch is that I've never been able to do it. It's just a trick he has, a wonderful relaxed feeling about performing."

Nelson Riddle had a slightly different take on the differences between the rhythms of the two men. "Sinatra digs into a song and tries to get into it," he noted. "Crosby has a calculated nonchalance – he tosses off a tune." This made for terrific rhythmic bounce and cheerful irony, but when contrasted with the vulnerability and poignancy that the volatile Sinatra could achieve with a song, there could be a certain emotional distance in Crosby's work, as there apparently was in his life. Crosby was the original cool singer; Sinatra the opposite of cool – as a man and an artist. And Crosby recognised the difference himself. "He creates a mood, which very few people are able to do," Bing once said of Frank. "I don't think I create a mood when I sing."

The two men had different voices, too, and different approaches to them. Crosby rarely ventured from his smooth baritone range to indulge in bravura finishes or extremity of tone. Sinatra not only learnt to make more than Crosby of the expressive "grain" in his voice, but would also, at various times in his career, venture to extremes, bringing startling drama to the music, as he did with the high F of "All Or Nothing At All" in 1939 and the low E of "Ol' Man River" in 1963. "Sinatra's voice is more 'live' and vibrant and fraught with shadows and colouring than Crosby's voice," Riddle observed.

Sinatra was always quick to pay tribute to Crosby, saying in the 1940s, "Bing was my first singing idol, and still is." The Old Groaner, meanwhile, acknowledged the rise of the Voice with the oft-quoted quip: "Frank Sinatra is the kind of singer who comes along once in a lifetime - but why did it have to be my lifetime?" He even sent an open letter of advice to the young crooner that was published in Motion Picture-Hollywood Magazine in December 1943. "Keep riding that skyrocket you're on, Frankie! I'm all for you," it said. "Yes, when I heard the whispers about you and me being bitter rivals, I just smiled."

Though entirely different temperamentally and for much of their careers politically, the two singers remained friendly throughout their lives, with Sinatra even signing the old man to his Reprise label in 1962, casting him in the Reprise Musical Repertory Theatre projects and the movie *Robin And The 7 Hoods*. Their professional encounters, mostly on radio and then TV, were never less than amiable, and their "Well, Did You Evah" duet in the movie *High Society* was a magical glimpse of the singers' respective performance styles.
(from *The Rough Guide To Sinatra*, pages 148-9, by Chris Ingham.)

3. Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture

Edited by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck. To be published by the University of Rochester Press on November 1. ISBN-10: 1580462618. ISBN-13: 978-1580462617. Hardcover, $39.95

This book draws together many of the papers delivered at the Hofstra seminar in 2002. This is what the advertising on Amazon says.

Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture is the first serious study of the singer/actor's art and of his centrality to the history of twentieth-century popular music, film, and the entertainment industry. The volume uses a wide range of scholarly and cultural perspectives to explore Crosby's unique and lasting achievements. It also includes tributes and reminiscences from Bing's widow Kathryn, his grandson Steve, his record producer Ken Barnes, and one of his most popular successors, Michael Feinstein. Other contributors include Gary Giddins, the author of a widely acclaimed recent biography of the singer, and Will Friedwald, the acknowledged expert on the development of the "great American songbook."

In addition to studying Bing Crosby's innovations and remarkable achievements as a recording artist, *Going My Way* explores his accomplishments as an actor, businessman, and radio and television performer. *Going My Way* makes an impressive case not only for Crosby's considerable talent and inimitable style, but also for his raising the quality of popular singing to the level of art. Contributors: Ken Barnes, Samuel L. Chell, Kathryn Crosby, Steven C. Crosby, John Mark Dempsey, Bernard F. Dick, Deborah Dolan, Michael Feinstein, Will Friedwald, Jeanne Fuchs, Gary Giddins, Peter Hammar, M. Thomas Inge, Malcolm Macfarlane, Eric Michael Mazur, Martin McQuade, Kathryn T. Nicolson, Elaine Anderson Phillips, Ruth Prigozy, Walter Raubicheck, Linda A. Robinson, Stephen C. Shafer, David White, F. B. Wiggins.

Ruth Prigozy is professor of English at Hofstra University. Walter Raubicheck is professor of English and chair of the department at Pace University.

The Last Music Maid

Judy Schmid interviews Alice Ludes, the last surviving member of the Music Maids vocal group.

"Good morning!" chirped the voice at the other end of the telephone. Strong and musical, just what you'd expect from a former member of Bing's KMH female group "The Music Maids" – except that Alice Sizer Ludes is 94!

Alice was only too happy to tell me about her wonderful life as a "Music Maid", as a mom to three kids, and a wife, not to mention a background singer in a lot of MGM musicals. Her son-in-law contacted Malcolm Macfarlane to mention that she's alive and well, still playing piano and entertaining her peers at the senior residential apartments she now calls home.

"I'm one of eight kids from Tacoma, Washington," Alice began. "I had a twin brother!" Alice claimed to have a terrible inferiority complex, shy around strangers, but blossomed at home, entertaining her parents and siblings with her dancing, singing, and piano playing.

"My older sister took piano lessons and I tagged along to keep her company – when we went home, I played by EAR what she'd just learned at the music teacher's home! My mother decided, since my sister was frustrated with her own ability, to arrange for me to take lessons – since it was the Depression, my brother mowed the music teacher's lawn in exchange for my lessons. I took lessons for a year, where I learned to read music, but because of the times, we had to discontinue lessons."

"I graduated from high school in January 1931 and sold ladies cosmetics door to door. I hated it. Then I tried my hand at being an elevator operator. It was a little better, but despite my shyness, I really wanted to sing. My mom knew this and spotted an ad in the Tacoma newspaper. There was a duo called the Williams Sisters, local gals who sang at clubs, who wanted to become a trio. With my mom's encouragement, I auditioned. I sang harmony, right in the middle of the other girls – one was high, one was low, and I was VERY happy being in the middle. I was hired and we went on the road. I was THRILLED!"

"We played a number of clubs in Tacoma and throughout Washington State," Alice reminisced. "Larry Crosby, who started his career as a musician's agent, became our agent, and booked us across the state. We eventually traveled to Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Hollywood, because of Larry's connections."

"While I loved the singing and performing – and arranging, as I'd become the arranger of all our songs – I was getting a little tired of being caught between the sisters who'd bicker now and again about who was going to become a soloist and a star first! I ended up being their "mom", picking up after them and wondering if I'd done the right thing," she added with a chuckle.

"Larry called – he'd booked us on a San Francisco radio program called Carefree Carnival and we jumped at the chance. After all, San Francisco was in California, as was Hollywood, where ALL the music was happening, we thought. We enjoyed San Francisco – I'd met a handsome young radio engineer named Ed Ludes who took a shine to me. And then Larry said, "How would you like to go to Hollywood and be on the Bing Crosby Woodbury Radio Show?" Bing! The Tacoma-born star? This put us all on our best behavior, and in April 1935, we performed on Bing's radio show."

"After Hollywood, we went on to Chicago and New York, but we weren't doing as well as we'd done previously. The sisters were unhappy not being stars, and I missed Ed. While in New York, we agreed to part ways,

and I wired Ed to tell him I was coming to California. He'd just accepted a position in Hollywood with NBC and welcomed the opportunity to see me on a regular basis. He mentioned there was a group called The Music Maids who might be willing to take on an additional vocalist, and I moved back west."

Meredith Willson, Music Director of the Carefree Carnival program, during rehearsal with the Williams Sisters in 1937: Top standing is Laura Williams, middle is Alice Sizer and sitting is Ethelyn Williams. (Thanks to David Alexander, the son-in-law of Alice Sizer Ludes, for making the photo available.)

"After an audition, I was hired as the newest Music Maid, and I called Larry Crosby to let him know I was back in town – being a Music Maid did NOT preclude me from taking other jobs and I wanted him to think of me now and again, despite the fact he was pretty much focused on the career of his younger brother, Bing."

"In 1939 we were hired to perform a musical number in *East Side of Heaven* with Bing. I was still star-struck, but I had the chance to remind Bing that as part of the Williams Sisters, I'd already performed with him on his radio show. He seemed pleased to be told – and started teasing me for being from Tacoma! Bing liked working with us and had his brother Everett draft a contract for us to join him on the Kraft Music Hall."

"Bing invited us to join him and his musicians at a show aired from Palm Springs, so that was my opportunity to plan a honeymoon, as Ed and I wanted to get married. Of course, when we arrived at Palm Springs, the musicians expected Ed to bunk in at one of their cottages, and the Music Maids expected me to bunk in with them. When everyone, including Bing, discovered we'd just gotten married, the teasing was non-stop!"

The Music Maids sing with Bing in East Side Of Heaven.

"My time with the Music Maids and as part of Kraft Music Hall was wonderful. Ken Carpenter was always happy, as he truly loved working with Bing. John Scott Trotter, who arranged all the orchestrations, worked with me, as I arranged most of the music for our vocal group, and he'd have us come to his apartment to rehearse. He was so relaxed, he'd greet us at the door wearing his bathrobe and pajamas! That always made us laugh! I'd then work with the girls, playing piano at any one of our homes, to get us ready for our Wednesday rehearsal of the show. We'd start planning the following week's show on Friday and we worked HARD, but it really is difficult to call what we did 'work'."

"Bing's father was often at the studios and he reminded me of my own father – jovial with a quiet sense of humor. Bing's brother, Bob, was also a regular visitor, as were any one or all of Bing's rambunctious boys. And Bing was always busy – he was always warm and playful with us, but there always seemed to be people wanting his time and attention, constantly. His assistant, Leo Lynn, would often pull him away to help him rehearse his songs where he couldn't be bothered by so many interruptions. But Bing seemed to have the most fun when rehearsing with the musicians – he REALLY loved musicians, the way they spoke, their talents – his spirits were at their highest when he was rehearsing with them. He could ad-lib with them for hours!"

"When Bing took his summers off, we stayed on and worked with the guest hosts – I can't think of any host who wasn't happy to have been invited by Bing to fill in while he summered with his sons or did tours with the military and on bond drives. In time, the perky Ginny

Erwin, who was called "Trudy" on the show, struck out as a soloist on Bing's show – she really wanted to solo and was so energetic and playful – she really kept the musicians and Bing laughing with her impishness. When Bing came back to the studio for the show in November 1944, we were no longer part of the show. The Music Maids had more-or-less dissolved over the summer – Ginny with her solo career, others of us with our families and now our children – it was 'time' and we had terrific memories of those wonderful days working with Bing."

The Music Maids support Bing on the Kraft Music Hall.

"I kept myself busy as a mom to two busy little boys (soon to add a daughter to the family) and was lucky to be always called by MGM or the other studios to be a background singer. You know those scenes in the big musicals where the dancers suddenly break into song? We were providing their voices – me and any number of other folks who enjoyed being background. I especially liked meeting and working with Judy Garland – I did vocals on *The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *The Harvey Girls*. I also did singing on cartoons! Yes, I had to think on my feet – if MGM called, I had to have a baby-sitter I could call at a moment's notice so I could rush off to the studio – I was very much a 'working mom'."

"Over the years, my family became my main focus but I kept singing with my children. I'd play piano for my daughter's dance class, and would mimic her dance steps at home to entertain her. I had a wonderful marriage with my Ed. I couldn't've been happier – great husband, beautiful children, and I'd worked for years with Bing Crosby. What a life!"

The other gals in the Music Maids are gone, sadly. I'm the only one left – we remained friends after the Kraft Music Hall ended, but as I mentioned, we all had new lives. The last time I spoke to one of the gals was probably 25 years ago – and I was so surprised that she and the other gals never kept their scrap books! I've kept mine – from my entire career! I enjoy looking at them from time to time, sharing them with my family."

Alice Sizer Ludes is a generous woman, quick to laugh, happy to share her story without a bit of boasting – the joy in her voice was obvious, and she continues to share her love of music and her story-telling as she entertains at nursing homes where the music she sang in the 30s and 40s has such meaning.

Judy Schmid

(Editor: David Alexander, Mrs. Ludes' son-in-law, was the one who alerted us to her whereabouts and he was also able to share some other information with us as follows.

A bit more on Alice....the Music Maids had billing above Dale Evans in the 1943 *Hoosier Holiday* movie with Alice having a nice speaking part. For several years Alice toured around the Ventura area doing her one-woman show, 'Alice in Music Land'. She and the Music Maids did at least two "Soundies," 16mm films that were played in jukeboxes instead of records. The earliest form of "music videos," decades before video was invented. I found two of these and transferred them to video and showed them at Alice's 90th birthday party.

I also found the single recording extant from "Carefree Carnival," the San Francisco radio show that Alice and the Williams Sisters sang on in 1936. I recorded the program and called Alice, asking her if this sounded familiar. She was well into her 80s but even with the poor sound quality of the telephone she was able to instantly identify herself and the sisters singing on the radio. The recording, an air check, had been under the bed of some old lady for 40 years. The program was 15 minutes long and I believe this is the only recording left. The museum in San Francisco has it.

David Alexander

Editor: Members may recall that Mrs. Ludes wrote sleeve notes on a Spokane LP and it's worth reading these again.

The Music Maids singing group was formed in 1939, with five gals who met and became friends while singing in the film studios in various musicals. The original members of the group were: June Clifford, Virginia Erwin, Dottie Messmer, Alice Ludes, and Denny Wilson. After deciding to stick together as a group, we started rehearsing long hours every day. We contacted Hal Hopper, formerly with the Pied Pipers of the Tommy Dorsey band, who wrote original arrangements for us. After several months, we heard that the producers of Kraft Music Hall were making some changes, and Bing was looking for a group to sing with him. As Larry Crosby had once been the business manager of a trio I sang with, we contacted him.

He named us the Music Maids and arranged an audition. Bing and the producers liked our group and we signed a contract to sing on Kraft Music Hall. Not long

after that, Bing starred in a movie for Universal Studios, "East Side of Heaven" and we were asked to sing a number with him in it, "Hang your Heart on a Hickory Limb". Bing always seemed relaxed, but he knew his part, and though he joked a lot, he paid attention to business. It was fun working with him.

Alice sings with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall.

Kraft Music Hall didn't take time off during the summer, so we worked straight through the year and broadcast every Thursday evening. During Bing's vacation time, various stars were guest hosts. Mary Martin was on one summer, and Victor Borge another. We sang numbers with them, just as we did with Bing. Our shows were live, so everything had to be done right the first time. Five of us were grouped around one side of one microphone, with Bing on the other side of it. He liked to ad lib and would throw in things to try to break us up. At the end of the number sometimes you could hear us giggling. He seemed to enjoy it. He liked to call us 'The Mice". We never knew where he got that idea, but we did have a cheese company as a sponsor!

Bing didn't like to rehearse, and preferred singing his own version of a song. It was our privilege to enjoy hearing him sing in person each week, with his clever interpretation of each number. John Scott Trotter led the orchestra, and he wrote the arrangements for the background music we sang in Bing's numbers. The voices were used as a very effective instrumental background. The Music Maids were also featured in a special arrangement on each program. Frequently the writers would give us some lines to speak with Bing, also.

(**Alice Ludes**, January 1981, writing on the sleeve notes for the LP 'Bing And The Music Maids'.)

How nice to read such warm memories of Bing! **Bob Achorn** has news of two others who have nice recollections of working with Mr. Crosby.

Films of the Golden Age

A couple of performers who worked with Bing have weighed in with kind words. **Edith Fellows** and **Robert Arthur** played in support of Bing at widely different times of his career. The occasional complaint that he could be cold and remote didn't register with them in the slightest.

They were interviewed about their careers in a quarterly magazine, 'Films of the Golden Age'. The interviewers were different and so were the circumstances. But each of them was asked about working with Bing Crosby, among other stars.

Edith Fellows, now 83, at 13 played the orphan Bing's character took under his wing in *Pennies from Heaven* (1936). She was often presumed to be a newcomer in that film. But she had begun in movies in 1929 and continued in stage and film roles up to recent years. She often has spoken positively of Bing. Her words this time to the interviewer, Michael Barnum, were:

> "He was wonderful, he really was. He had just had his fourth child born, another boy. I remember that when I first met him, I congratulated him on the birth of his son and he had told me he had hoped it would be a girl. Then he said, "I'll tell you what. We will be on this picture for at least three months, how about we pretend you are my little girl?' And of course I loved that, and that is how we went about it. He'd play tricks on me and we'd do all kinds of fun things. It was such a great experience."
>
> *(Lindsay Crosby was in fact born nearly two years after the making 'Pennies From Heaven' but it's still a nice story!)*

That warm relationship has been frequently confirmed, notably by Gary Giddins in his book about Bing.

Robert Arthur, now 81, has been heard from less frequently. He made 35 films, starting in 1945, then left the business for other interests. At 25, he played Bing's son in *Just for You.* Kendahl Cruver, the interviewer,

reported:

"Playing with Bing Crosby in the musical *Just for You* (1950) was one of Arthur's happiest film experiences. Jane Wyman gave him acting tips. Ethel Barrymore helped him memorize his lines, and Bing liked him so much that he offered him career guidance once filming had wrapped. He also adored his screen kid sister, Natalie Wood. Arthur was originally slated to sing the title song, but, according to him, Crosby said, "No, no, I'll sing it because you're too good."

Bob Arthur awaits Bing's reaction to his song in Just For You.

Edith Fellows was interviewed at the Motion Picture Country Home, where she has enjoyed contacts with other performers. Robert Arthur was interviewed from his home town of Aberdeen, Washington.

Bob Achorn

Editor: Mr. Arthur was also interviewed for a biography of Natalie Wood and here's a relevant extract.

> Crosby had similarly high standards on the set. "What was really surprising about Bing Crosby to me was that he really was a very, very, bright man. He knew everybody's lines and knew everything about the camera. He always came across as this relaxed performer but he was far from relaxed."
>
> (Bob Arthur as quoted in *Natasha : The Biography of Natalie Wood*, page 94)

Binging Around

Pete Cakanic is back and this time he looks at Bing and Technology

Bing Crosby has been involved with technology his entire career. He may not have been the first to use a microphone, but he was the first to really understand what it could do for popular singing. His microphone technique revolutionized popular singing. And we know that Bing Crosby Enterprises did much research for the military in World War 2. The unit helped improve bomb sights on aircraft for instance. Then in 1946 Bing's insistence in recording his radio programs, first on transcription discs, then on tape, led to a revolution in radio and later television.

Since Bing's passing in 1977, recording and audio technology has cascaded in unbelievable stages. Digitizing became so proficient; one could turn a tenor into a baritone. Merv Griffin, one time band singer and current billionaire businessman told Larry King it was suggested to him to make some records. "At my age?" he scoffed. But he tried it and was amazed at what the engineers could accomplish with his 80 year old voice.

In the 1950s, Bing, with Buddy Cole's backing, taped a multitude of tunes for his CBS radio shows which were not released commercially until 1979, when the 2-LP set 'Songs Of A Lifetime' was produced by Ken Barnes. Filtered out of the tapes was some of Buddy Cole's louder organ grinding and filled in beautifully with modern orchestration by the Pete Moore orchestra. Thus with new technology, the remixing provides us with some of Bing's finest singing of classic pop standards.

Frank Sinatra, when in his mature years, was asked how important musical backing was and he replied that it was "at least 60 percent." The improvement to the Bing/Buddy Cole tapes by Moore's arrangements demonstrates Sinatra's contention.

An article in the Augusta (GA) Chronicle headlines "Music Retailers no Longer Call the Tune." It goes on to say: "The new wave of downloading music off the internet is exploding. In 2005 more than 350 million songs were downloaded. A 150 percent jump over 2004. Digital album sales soared by 195 percent." The newspaper credits the Scripps Howard organization for the numbers. Of course, Bing is in there too as illustrated by the article 'Bing in the digital downloads charts' in BING magazine #142.

It's doubtful I'll be a downloading consumer but how wonderful it must be to scan an internet index such as that maintained by i-tunes for example and download the song you want. Imagine being able to download all of Bing's versions of "Ol Blue" or 'White Christmas' and do an instant comparison without having to search a disorganized collection.

Another article, this one reprinted from the San Jose Mercury News, tells of two physicists who have developed a way to rescue historic sounds. The lead of the article notes that no one has heard Thomas Edison's first recordings since they were made on fragile strips of tinfoil; or Queen Victoria's voice since she died. The recording of the British Monarch who ruled from 1837

to 1901 was made on a wax cylinder now too fragile to be played. The Queen resisted making the recording because then any commoner would be able to command her to speak.

The two physicists, Carl Haber and Vitally Fadeyev at Lawrence Berkley National Laboratory, San Jose, CA were inspired to do sound restoration work by a broadcast on National Public Radio which reported that of the 2.5 million recordings in the Library of Congress, 1.5 million are on wax cylinders or discs which are especially vulnerable to damage. The NPR report got the physicists thinking. What if they could analyze the recordings the same way they tracked particles, examining them with a digital video recorder that is guided by a computer. "You could figure out what shape the groove in a record is and then analyze it optically instead of playing it," Mr. Haber noted.

"There are damaged and delicate recordings one is afraid to touch. If you could read them without touching, you might be able to bring them back." Mr. Haber said researchers from a number of fields have contacted the team to see if they can help rescue old recordings. A linguist wants to hear the 100 year old voices of the Yurok Indians. Another scholar longs to hear the voice of Bertrand Russell...

Bing was so prolific in his recording career, could there be another "Poor Little G String" in some storage bin waiting to be found and rescued? Not impossible now.

From France comes some Karaoke software called *My Voice*. Many male Bingers have thought they sound just a wee bit like Bing in a shower, or head down a barrel. Now one can insert a CD in the computer select a song track and silence the singer's voice to a whisper then sing along (Binglike, as much as possible). If one is off key another piece of software available is called *Singing Coach*. The PC program designed to help users with their crooning includes 20 singing lessons and a headset with a built in mic so that vocalists-in-training receive instant feedback on their pitch.

There is so much science in progress, one news account tells of scientists that have begun slicing and dicing the first of hundreds of microscopic specs of comet dust, virtually unchanged since the birth of the solar system. NASA said samples were brought to Earth last January.

With all this new science going on, it makes me wonder. Sound is energy isn't it? Is it possible that every sound ever uttered could be stored in space? And whose voice would occupy the most cavernous space? Der Bingle, of course...

His record sales have been estimated at 500 million. The number is probably closer to a billion. 'White Christmas' alone is at least 100 million. Then let's add all the Bing singing on radio, TV, movies and personal appearance plus private singing. Let's not forget that WC has been in the public domain for 64 years and played millions, maybe a billion times since 1942. If one could vacuum Bing's voice into one instantaneous sound just think what one heck of a boo, boo, booooooooom it would produce. Still sonorous, no doubt.

Bing is on more than 350 compact discs internationally. His movies are still shown... I find the quote from Angelo Patri a fitting way to depart *Binging Around* this time:

> *"The life of a soul on earth lasts beyond his departure. You will always feel that life touching yours, that voice speaking to you."*

Pete Cakanic bingfan@comcast.net

I've Got Five Dollars – and a bit more!

We've mentioned before some of the many interesting exchanges on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum and your Editor's eye was caught by a posting by our own Greg Van Beek some months ago. Here's what he had to say.

"Something you may not have noticed before....try listening to the CD release of Bing 'N' Basie with headphones, such as with a CD walkman. Bing can be heard, quite plainly, jingling the coins in his pockets on most of the songs. Ken Barnes can attest to this habit of Bing's. If I remember reading correctly, it was during the sessions with Fred Astaire in 1975 that Bing's coin-jingling bled through onto his vocals. When Ken asked him to empty his pockets, he had something like $34 dollars in pocket change!"

"Bird Custard" (a nom-de-plume) then queried: "Which tracks Greg? I listened to "Snowbird" and "Little Green Apples" today on my MP3 player and couldn't hear anything like coins. Having said that I'm sure I can hear sheet music turning on "Maggie" with Gary "It's All About Me" Crosby!"

Greg advised that "The best example is on "All His Children"." And Sicamous (another pen name) agreed saying;

"Yes it is clearly noticeable on "All His Children", especially at the 15-25 second mark, but also throughout the track. It is only really noticeable with headphones."

Greg finished off the thread with more revelations:

Going back further, if you listen to his 1962 recording of "The Littlest Angel" though a headset, you'll not only hear coins jingling, but also Bing turning the sheet music page just before he starts the second chorus.

Also, on Bing's last Christmas TV special,

during the dialogue scene with David Bowie prior to their duet, when Bing says the line "I can honestly say I haven't seen him, but come on in", he drops his arms to his sides and in doing so, his hands hit his pants pockets, jingling the stash of coins inside.

Useless trivia, I know, but I always found it fascinating that Bing carried such a large amount of coins in his pockets at all times. I suppose with three kids around the house, having the extra pocket change did come in handy.

I guess quite a few of us will be getting the headphones out to check on Bing's habit.

Celluloid Crosby

The last place I would expect to find a DVD copy of *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* would be tacked onto the end of an Astaire/Rogers film. Yet Ken Crossland's "Keeping Track" column in the last issue of BING lets us know that Turner Entertainment have included it on the Region 1 issue of *The Gay Divorcee*.

Of all the 1930s studio shorts showing Hollywood personalities off duty the one most deserving of repeated viewings is *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove*. Filmed in the November of 1934 and released to cinemas in the States as a supporting short in the spring of 1935 it fully justified the full review it received from the film exhibitors' trade newspaper *Film Daily*. It is worthwhile quoting that review in full to appreciate the way in which *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* could be regarded as a box-office draw capable of propping up a mediocre main feature:

> "Photographed in Technicolor, this musical revue is a grand buy for any showman. This famous night club, the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles, is presented on Star Night, when all the Hollywood stars attend. Sell this to the fans as the same entertainment that nightly thrills the stars. Entertainers include Ted Fio Rito and his orchestra, Eduardo Durant's tango band, and the Fanchon and Marco Sunkist Beauties. Leo Carrillo is the master of ceremonies, and introduces a galaxy of stars from the tables. Among these are Mary Pickford, Jack Oakie, Arline Judge, Bing Crosby and Gary Cooper. Here is a chance to watch the stars at play, being entertained by others. Gorgeously produced, with smartness, class and snap."
> (*Film Daily*, March 25, 1935)

Praise indeed for a programme filler with a running time of just eighteen minutes.

In the short, Bing's performance comes about two-thirds into proceedings when he is introduced by Mary Pickford. She jokingly refers to him as Rudy Vallee, "a singer whose voice has thrilled the entire listening world". Bing then sings the Robin and Rainger composition "With Every Breath I Take". Bing's musical accompaniment was provided by Ted Fio Rito and his orchestra. It was the only time Fio Rito accompanied Bing. Fio Rito (sometimes expressed as to as Fiorito) was a composer/pianist/bandleader who never became a major name in any of those three musical skills but who led a fairly successful society band for about thirty years. If he had managed to secure a vocalist of the calibre of Crosby, Sinatra or Haymes he might be better remembered than he is. Unfortunately, with male singers of the ilk of Muzzy Marcellino and Candy Candido he was guaranteed relative obscurity. "With Every Breath I Take" was originally written for Paramount's 1934 release *Here is My Heart*, when Bing sang it twice. He subsequently made a recording of it for Decca at the end of that year. The bonus with the performance in *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* is that the short was shot in colour. For filmgoers it bridged the gap of thirteen years when Bing was presented on screen in black and white between *King of Jazz* and *Dixie*.

Bing is introduced by Mary Pickford.

Bing's home studio was Paramount but M-G-M released the *Star Night* short. As far as Paramount was concerned it could only provide free publicity for their contractees. Indeed, if you count the nightclubbers featured in the short, most of them were regulars in Paramount productions. Mae West, Gary Cooper, Johnny Mack Brown and Buddy Rogers frequently appeared in Paramount pictures. And then there was Toby Wing, about whom more later. The strong link with Paramount was no surprise. The short's producer was Louis Lewyn. Between 1932 and 1934 he had been responsible for providing Paramount with one reelers depicting the studio's stars either relaxing off set or promoting forthcoming Paramount films. The series was known as *Hollywood on Parade*. Their running time was approximately ten minutes. Those making an appearance for these programmers were not paid for their services. Bing turned up in four of them. The main differences between Lewyn's Paramount distributed shorts and his M-G-M branded effort were extended running time, location shooting and colour.

And now to return to Toby Wing. What was she doing at the Cocoanut Grove? At the time she was signed to Paramount and had caught the eye of Maurice Chevalier when she was walking past his dressing room. Chevalier took a fancy and they became regulars at the Grove. Photographers learned that they could be seen at the night club and shortly thereafter *Photoplay* magazine ran an article entitled "The Girl Chevalier Left Behind".

In early 1935 she could be seen in two supporting shorts: *Star Night* and *Rhythm on the Roof*. The latter was an eleven minute one-reeler featuring Bob Crosby. She had first appeared on screen alongside Bing in the 1932 production of *Blue of the Night*, a Sennett short which Paramount released at the beginning of 1933. In *Blue of the Night* she was the friend of Margie "Babe" Kane, Bing's leading lady. She was sixteen years old at the time but a Hollywood veteran of some seven years. Her introduction to Hollywood came about because her father was an assistant director who doubled as a production manager. He found bit parts for Toby and her sister Pat in a handful of feature films before Toby caught the eye of Jack Oakie. That friendship eventually resulted in a one year contract with Sam Goldwyn. She was immediately cast as a Goldwyn Girl in the Eddie Cantor starrers *Palmy Days* (1931) and *The Kid From Spain* (1932). It is between those two that Mack Sennett borrowed her for some of his short productions, *Blue of the Night* being one such. It was the friendship with Oakie that resulted in her next appearance in a Crosby film. That was *College Humor* (1933). It was an uncredited bit part but Paramount felt she had potential and as Goldwyn had not renewed her contract they signed her up. The friendship with Oakie was still ongoing. He must have had pull at Paramount. When Bing's follow up film for the studio, *Too Much Harmony*, went before the cameras in June of 1933 not only was Oakie's mother, Evelyn Offield Oakie, cast as his screen mother but he also managed to provide payroll opportunities for Toby Wing and her sister Pat, albeit the sisters were in bit roles.

Toby's tenure at Paramount seemed secure but the studio did not capitalise on her popularity, which may have been stronger off-screen than on. She had many suitors. One who could have advanced her career was Carl Laemmle, Jr., a producer at Universal as well as the son of that studio's founder. It would seem that Paramount had modest plans for her future and on June 13th, 1935, she reported for work on *Two for Tonight*. By the time the film was premiered she did not even figure at the bottom of the cast list. She appeared in a small uncredited role as a college girl and did not share any time on screen with Bing. Although the fan magazines were covering her career, no doubt inspired by her photogenic looks, Paramount was determined to ignore her potential. Cecil B. DeMille was filming *The Crusades* for the studio and an eleven minute promotional short was made based on the casting of that epic. Toby Wing featured in it. It was appropriately titled *Hollywood Extra Girl*.

Bing with Toby Wing and Jack Oakie.

Her link with Bing resurrected itself in 1949 when Eagle-Lion Films released a sixty-seven minute compilation of Mack Sennett shorts called *Down Memory Lane*. Bing and Wing were together again on screen when footage from *Blue of the Night* was introduced by Steve Allen. By then Toby Wing's name meant little to any but her hard core admirers. She had quit showbusiness in 1940 following her marriage to aviator Dick Merrill some two years earlier. The 1930s

were her decade. She had suitors like assistant director Albert "Cubby" Broccoli who later brought James Bond to the big screen, actor Jackie Coogan, millionaire Erskine Eaton, comedian Pinky Tomlin and presidential son Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. The press referred to her as "Hollywood's most engaged girl". How unfortunate that she was never courted by an influential casting director.

I'll end with a couple of quotes. Toby Wing was under contract to Paramount at the same time as Marlene Dietrich. Dietrich regarded Wing as a career threat. Dietrich's daughter said: "Toby walked into a room and every man in the place would turn and stare. Mother hated her for that reason, and I dare say some others beside." The last word is from the lady herself. With her Hollywood days well behind her she was in a philosophical mood when she stated: "A good deal of the publicity about me seems to have been taken up with what are known as my many engagements. I was engaged three times, but I only married once."

Martha Virginia "Toby" Wing, born in Richmond, Virginia, July 14th, 1915 died in Mathews, Virginia, 22nd March, 2001.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

SAY ONE FOR ME Film. This 1959 release through 20th Century-Fox was not tailor made for Bing. Fox offered the film to Crosby in the spring of 1958. They owned the property and had already assigned the directorial chore to Frank Tashlin when the part of Tony Vincent, eventually portrayed by Robert Wagner, was to be played by Frank Sinatra. No doubt Sinatra had studied the script before he ducked out. Even so, on the face of it *Say One for Me* had everything going for it as a Crosby picture. It was in colour and CinemaScope and Bing was allowed the select the writers of the songs to be incorporated into the story. It would be natural to assume that Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen would be called upon to provide Bing's three vocal numbers. However, Johnny Burke was in semi-retirement and so Sammy Cahn collaborated with Van Heusen and wrote the lyrics. Cahn had a proven track record with several Sinatra hits to his credit. As it turned out Bing's numbers - "Say One For Me", "I Couldn't Care Less" and "The Secret of Christmas" - were decidedly a cut above the film's other musical items. "Chico's Choo-choo" and "The Night Rock 'n' Roll Died (Almost)" were instantly forgettable. The latter title proved beyond the vocal capabilities of Judy Harriet, who "sang" it in the film with her voice dubbed by Rosemary June. The film's other female vocalist was Debbie Reynolds. She replaced Polly Bergen, who was originally cast in the part of Holly LaMaise, a night club singer. Miss Bergen probably shared Sinatra's thoughts in declining the offer of work on the film. Because the Holly LaMaise part called for a singer who could dance, Barrie Chase was then considered before Debbie Reynolds was hired. When *Say One for Me* was released it was not held in high regard by either critics or the public. Leonard Maltin called it "terribly contrived; no memorable music", five words which seemed to echo the lengthier reviews of the time. But the most bizarre review of any Crosby film has to be attributed to the critic hiding behind the initials L.E.R. writing in June of 1959 for the Hollywood Citizen News. This guy knew how to get a message over. He wrote: "For visual appeal, this new 20th Century-Fox film, in color and CinemaScope, is a world beater. The costumes, sets, color-camera craftsmanship and backgrounds are a treat for sore eyes, as the adage goes. A handsome production from start to finish, it misses only in the departments of story, direction and acting, three important categories, nonetheless." Where does the blame for *Say One for Me* lie? The film's opening credits offer a clue. It announces 'A Bing Crosby Production'.

SAY ONE FOR ME Song. Near the start of the film Debbie Reynolds, in the role of nightclub singer, sings the song whilst rehearsing her act. She is assisted by Father Conroy (Bing). Later on, in a sequence set in a church, Bing's voice is heard singing the song offscreen. It is a pleasant enough number which Bing recorded several times in March of 1959. An attempt with Percy Faith's orchestra accompanying Bing was allotted a master number but was not released. Two versions recorded for the film's soundtrack with Lionel Newman's orchestra in support appeared on the Columbia soundtrack album, one version being a duet with Debbie Reynolds. The fourth and best version was recorded for release as a single with Frank De Vol and his orchestra providing backing.

SCARED STIFF Film. Paramount regarded Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis as the studio's successors to Hope and Crosby. In the 1953 re-make of Bob Hope's 1940 comedy *The Ghost Breakers* Hope & Crosby make a gag appearance as skeletons at the close of *Scared Stiff*.

SCHENCK, JOSEPH M. (1878-1961) One of Hollywood's founding fathers. It was as a producer, a role he relinquished after *Reaching for the Moon* (1931), that he must have agreed to Bing's one song appearance in that film. Schenck started in the movie business as an early exhibitor - he part-owned a couple of nickelodeons. He was involved with the company that eventually became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, was appointed chairman of United Artists and founded 20th Century pictures. When that studio merged with Fox he became board chairman of 20th Century-Fox. In 1941 he was imprisoned on charges involving income tax and union payoffs. In 1953 he went into partnership with Mike Todd to exploit Todd-AO, the widescreen system. That c.v. would seem to touch on most aspects of Hollywood's first half century.

SCHERTZINGER, VICTOR (1890-1941) Classical violinist turned film director. He set the standard and style for the Hope and Crosby *Road* pictures when he directed the first two: *Singapore* (1940) and *Zanzibar* (1941). His other Crosby films as director were *Rhythm On The River* (1940) and *Birth of the Blues* (1941). Schertzinger died between completion of filming the latter and its December premiere. He also provided the music for a couple of songs in the first *Road* picture. They were "Captain Custard", a duet with Hope and "The Moon and the Willow Tree" which

Dorothy Lamour sang in the film but which Bing recorded for Decca. The lyrics to both were by Johnny Burke. Schertzinger entered films in the silent era, his first directorial credits appearing in 1917. Paramount used him in the 1930s to direct some of its successful musical comedies such as *Let's Live Tonight* (1935) and *The Music Goes 'Round* (1936).

SCHOOLDAYS Song. One of several Gus Edwards songs from *The Star Maker* (1939). In that thinly disguised biopic of Edwards, Bing duetted the song with Linda Ware in a scene when it was featured in a Broadway musical. Bing did not make a studio recording of the song. As with several songs composed by Edwards, Will D. Cobb wrote the lyrics.

SEARCH IS THROUGH, THE Song. In *The Country Girl* (1954) there is a flashback sequence where the Crosby character is shown ten years earlier with his wife and young son. This Ira Gershwin-Harold Arlen composition is heard on the soundtrack.

Bing sings 'The Search Is Through'.

SEATON, GEORGE (1911-1979) [George Stenius] Producer, director, screenwriter. Seaton put those three skills to work on Bing's entry into serious film drama in the first half of the 1950s. For *Little Boy Lost* (1953) and *The Country Girl* (1954) he was co-producer with William Perlberg. Seaton received an Oscar nomination as director and won the Oscar for his screenplay of the latter. He progressed steadily along the Hollywood career path. He moved to films from work on the stage as an actor. His first accepted screenplay was for the Marx Brothers film *A Day at the Races* in 1937 and he went on to win an Oscar for his screenplay for *Miracle On 34th. Street* (1947). His first directorial job was for *Diamond Horseshoe* (1945) for which he also wrote the screenplay. *Rhubard* (1951) saw his debut as producer. His most financially successful movie was undoubtedly *Airport* (1970) for which he wrote the screenplay (this was also nominated for an Oscar) and went on to direct. Then his career fizzled out with only the forgotten *Showdown* from 1973 following his biggest triumph.

SECOND TIME AROUND, THE Song. Now an accepted entry in the Great American Songbook catalogue, Bing introduced this Sammy Cahn-James Van Heusen song in *High Time* (1960). Bing is seen to be apparently accompanying himself on the piano as he sings the perfectly apt lyrics. The plot concerned the romance between widower Crosby and widow Nicole Maurey. The song received an Academy Award nomination but lost out to "Never on Sunday". Subsequent versions by Sinatra, Shirley Bassey and Andy Williams cemented its popularity.

SECOND-HAND TURBAN AND A CRYSTAL BALL, A Song. I find it hard to credit the composers of the preceding song with this Cahn-Van Heusen entry for the 1956 remake of *Anything Goes*. It is as awkward to perform as its title suggests. Even so, Bing and Donald O'Connor do the best they can with it as part of their ship's concert act.

SECRET OF CHRISTMAS, THE Song. This third in a row song entry by Cahn and Van Heusen was written by them for *Say One For Me* (1960). Ray Walston, the song's fictional composer, sings it first in the film. It then forms the film's finale when Bing, joined by Walston and Debbie Reynolds, sings it during a television performance. It never became an accepted Christmas standard although Bing did his best to help it along. It was issued as a Christmas single in 1959 and then re-recorded for the Reprise album "Twelve Songs of Christmas" in 1964.

SELLERS, PETER (1925-1980) Comedian who became a serious actor. In *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962) Sellers reprised his Indian doctor character from the 1961 success *The Millionairess*. In a sequence in *Hong Kong* where Hope has lost his memory, Bing takes him to Sellers' surgery only to be referred by the doctor to a Tibetan lama. If you are interested in Sellers your hardest task is to select the biography which gets closest to the truth. I recommend "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers" by Roger Lewis, which formed the basis of Sellers' film biography. But it was Sellers who provided the finest summation of himself. He said: "If you ask me to play myself, I will not know what to do. I do not know who or what I am."

SENNETT, MACK [Michael Sinnott] (1880-1960) Producer who put slapstick on the map in movies. Would Bing have achieved screen greatness later in his career without Sennett? In the summer of 1931 Sennett took a chance on engaging Bing to make six shorts. The Crosby voice was familiar to many North Americans but the face behind the voice was an unknown quantity until Mack Sennett starred Bing in half a dozen two-reel comedies. They were *I Surrender Dear*, *One More Chance*, *Dream House*, *Billboard Girl*, *Sing, Bing, Sing* and *Blue of the Night*. When talking pictures were introduced, the Sennett style of film comedy became redundant overnight. The antics of the likes of Chester Conklin, Mack Swain and the Keystone Kops seemed unsophisticated to audiences turning to "all talking, all singing, all dancing" features or serious dramas. In fact, by the mid-thirties Sennett's contribution to Hollywood's fame and fortunes was almost forgotten. But for a special Academy Award in 1937 (for lasting contribution to the comedy technique of the screen) he would have remained in retirement in his native Canada. As it was, he was appointed technical

advisor on *Cavalcade* (1939) and then showed his face on screen ten years later when he was involved with *Down Memory Lane*, a feature film which stitched together excerpts from his shorts, including some he made with Bing. In 1955 his ghost written autobiography "King of Comedy" was published but it was disappointing because of its lack of detail.

SEYMOUR, ANNE (1909-1988) [Anne Eckert] Actress. Until recent times any cinematic portrayal of a judge resulted in the casting of a male. Anne Seymour must have been one of the first females to preside over an American court of law in *Man on Fire* (1957). The plot concerned a custody battle involving the son of Earl Carlton (Bing). Judge Randolph (Seymour) hears the case informally. The early years of her acting career found her appearing in melodramatic offerings such as *All the King's Men* (1949), *Desire Under the Elms* (1958) and *Home From the Hill* (1960). After appearing in that last movie, Disney cast her in *Pollyanna* and thereafter she was in less intense roles. The films veered from the memorable *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1967) to the forgettable *Stay Away Joe* (1968).

SEYMOUR, DAN (1915-1993) Character actor. One of the first parts he played in a film was in *Road to Morocco* (1942). He was the Arab to whom Crosby sold Hope in payment for a meal. Thereafter Seymour's fate was sealed. He was forever a menacing heavyweight. From *Casablanca* (1943) through to *The Return of the Fly* (1959) you knew he was not the bringer of good tidings.

Keith Parkinson

The Screen Legend Collections

Gary Giddins wrote a review of various DVD sets for the *New York Sun* on November 14. With grateful thanks to Gary and the newspaper, we are reproducing it here for you all to read. Think you'll like it!

For the past 50-plus years, you had about as much chance of seeing a complete print of a 1940 Bing Crosby vehicle called *If I Had My Way* as you did of, say, the initial seven-hour version of *Greed* — which is to say no chance at all. Admittedly, there wasn't much demand for it. Still, while *Greed*, the lost grail of cinematic obsession as practiced by Erich von Stroheim, was permanently sacrificed to greed, Universal held onto what a company archivist assured me was a "pristine" interpositive of *If I Had My Way*. The studio just didn't want anyone to see it. But more about that in a moment.

As of today, you can buy the complete *If I Had My Way* for less than six bucks, or a fifth of the retail price of "Bing Crosby: Screen Legend Collection." This is one of Universal's generous (if elemental — not even a chapter index, though English and French subtitles are included) DVD clearance packages. Previous offerings collected horror films and enough Abbott and Costellos to induce delirium. Next week, Universal will issue at a bargain price the seven key Preston Sturges comedies as "The Filmmaker Collection" (who comes up with these titles?), which rank among the most insidiously funny movies ever made.

The present Universal series aims to soothe completists. Each volume dips into the sediment of great careers for five pictures, some long forgotten and deservedly so. In addition to Crosby, the others released today resurrect obscurities by Cary Grant and Rock Hudson. They will require the curiosity of those determined to see a tuxedoed Grant posing in drawing rooms before he learned to act, and Hudson aglow with ManTan as a Baghdad freedom fighter back when insurrections were a good thing.

The Grant quintet is somniferous despite promisingly campy situations, like *Big Brown Eyes* (1936), a schizoid Nick and Nora wannabe directed by Raoul Walsh with Joan Bennett as a manicurist-turned-reporter and Grant as a detective doubling as a gender-confused ventriloquist. Grant plays a beautician who learns that beauty is only skin deep in *Kiss and Make Up* (1934), and a blind pilot determined to save aviatrix Myrna Loy in *Wings in the Dark* (1935).

The Hudson collection is made savory by two sought-after directorial oddities. Douglas Sirk's deceptively nostalgic small-town elegy *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?* (1952) explores a recurring American fantasy: A millionaire seeks to enrich others but ultimately pulls Babbitts out of his hat. The film owes as much to Sirk's mise-en-scene as to the crusty ebullience of co-star Charles Coburn.

Robert Aldrich's *The Last Sunset* (1961) is a benchmark in Western pathography, involving incest and suicide as Hudson's sheriff seeks a man with "a hole in his chin," played to order by Kirk Douglas. If the camerawork, traveling over mountainous terrain, borrows from the Anthony Mann playbook, the first shot of Dorothy Malone reeks of sexual unrest á la Aldrich.

The Golden Blade (1953), Hudson's Iraqi escapade, is exuberant, but anyone who can last through *The Spiral Road* (1962), in which Doc Rock goes to the Netherlands and defies God, is likely to end up feeling the way Rock looks after God defies him back.

The Crosby set wins by a tonsil: Even when all around him turns to shtick, der Bingle remains a great singer in peak voice. The low point in the set is the naval recruitment orgy, *Here Come the Waves* (1944), an incessant Mark Sandwich musical with Betty Hutton as twins, though only one is as annoying as Betty Hutton. The joke is that Crosby plays a Frank Sinatra-style crooner, clutching a microphone stand as a swooning woman is carried off on a gurney. Unhappily, Crosby's weakness for blackface is exercised in a duet of "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" with dim-bulb Sonny Tufts — especially galling given the segregation that divided the armed forces.

Frank Tuttle's *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), a megahit in its day, spurred interest in all things Hawaiian with its

score ("Blue Hawaii," "Sweet Leilani") and scenic shots by master cinematographer Karl Struss. Dated by low humor involving a pig, it is polished by Tuttle's imaginative staging and a neat plot device designed to fool viewers along with leading lady Shirley Ross. *Double or Nothing* (1937), sluggishly directed by Theodore Reed, leavens another millionaire-with-a-munificent-plan story with intermittent rewards, like Martha Raye's azure-tinted fuax striptease, "It's On, It's Off."

Of greater interest are the two films Crosby made at Universal as an independent agent and co-producer with director David Butler: *East Side of Heaven* (1939) and *If I Had My Way*. The former is a minor but swift-moving screwball musical festooned with inside show-biz jokes and a splendid cast led by Crosby and the curvaceously brighteyed Joan Blondel. Bing plays a purveyor of singing telegrams who gets stuck with an infant (surely the oddest box-office attraction of the era, Baby Sandy, who retired at four).

The mystery of the butchered *If I Had My Way* gets to the nub of why it was made. Crosby and Butler shared a love of old show business, especially vaudeville and minstrelsy. Crosby's films are littered with references to that era (*Double or Nothing* has an interpolated vaudeville show). For this film, they contrived a story that allowed them to preserve on film a few figures who had faded from view many years earlier, especially the legendary minstrel Eddie Leonard, whose three-minute "Ida" is his only filmed legacy.

When the film was sold to television in the late 1940s, it was cut to 80 minutes from 94 to accommodate ads — not because of Leonard's blackface number, as was widely assumed. All the vaudeville numbers were cut along with a solo by Bing's 14-year-old co-star Gloria Jean. The missing minutes were thought lost: Even the personal copies of Crosby and Gloria Jean lacked sequences.

So now we have a pristine print. Great film? Hardly, but it is a highly entertaining mixture of lend-lease politics, show-biz lore, and social wish fulfillment. Support is provided by Charles Winninger, Allyn Joslyn, a squirrel named Crack, and a Monaco and Burke score; on the minus side, there is the ceaseless mugging of El Brendel, the fake Swede of vaudeville who — go figure — never stopped working or sucking the life out of every scene he was in.

Crosby is thoroughly appealing as Gloria Jean's temporary guardian — warm but casual, skirting the temptation to jerk tears. For anyone interested in ancient show business, a frisson is provided by the one-line walk-ons by Grace La Rue, Trixie Friganza, and the man who established transvestitism in American entertainment and had a Broadway theater named for him, Julian Eltinge. He jokes about smoking cigars while dressed as a woman; for all the pearls and chiffon, he was as closeted as Ted Haggart.

Eddie Leonard, however, is magical. Unlike Crosby in "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," his blackface is too much a part of historical ritual to offend. I doubt that even those who are offended can fail to admire his artistry. Here is the original moonwalk, the yodeling croon that attracted attention when minstrel Emmett Miller was revived on records a few years ago, the rhythmic panache of the 1890s. Crosby introduces him as "64-years-young," but he was probably 70 and would be dead within the year. Leonard makes this film a significant time capsule, evoking the racial conflation of otherness and respect that animated minstrelsy before it caved into vicious stereotypes. He's a missing link.

Gary Giddins

Catching Up with Bob Pasch, Bing Crosby Tribute Performer

Greg Van Beek brings us up-to-date with Bob Pasch's activities.

Most of you are no doubt familiar with ICC member Bob Pasch of Phoenix, Arizona. Bob has been performing a highly lauded Bing Crosby Tribute show around the United States for close to thirty years now. Many of you saw Bob perform at the 2003 centennial celebration, held at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, where Bob played a prominent role in the proceedings. Recently, Bob sent me a recap of some of his recent travels and his latest prestigious award for the benefit of his fellow members.

In 2006, Bob was the honored recipient of the Cloney Award, presented by IGCITA (International Guild of Celebrity Impersonators and Tribute Artists) in the category of Most Outstanding Celebrity Tribute Act. This trophy was presented to Lynn Roberts (who plays Bob Hope in the act) and to Bob Pasch for his tribute to Bing Crosby. The ICC congratulates Bob for this richly deserved award. (see picture overleaf)

Bob and his wife Lenora also had an opportunity to promote Bing's music by taking his Tribute to Bing

Crosby Show to the lavish Palms Showroom (appropriately decorated in blue and gold hues) at the Crown Casino in Melbourne, Australia. For this two-week performance (November 28-December 7, 2006), Bob was accompanied by the Alligator Jazz Band, one of the top bands in Australia, comprised of six musicians. Each of Bob's seventy-minute performances featured many of Bing's well-known songs, including 'Pennies From Heaven', 'McNamara's Band', 'San Fernando Valley', 'Dinah', 'True Love', 'Galway Bay', 'San Antonio Rose', 'I'll Be Seeing You', ''Mississippi Mud', among others. The show also featured a young Australian jazz singer, Yvette Johansson. Bob reports all of the shows were very well received, and that "we even had young people attend, including teenagers, so there is still hope!"

Bob Pasch in action.

As part of the promotional package, Bob was featured on six major Australian radio stations for interviews, along with an interview in the Herald Sun, Australia's largest newspaper.

Several members of the Melbourne Bing Crosby Fan Club attended the performances, and Bob and Lenora, in turn, attended that Fan Club's December meeting, which gave them the opportunity to meet several Australian Crosby fans. Part of the meeting included a screening of *The Bells of St. Mary's.*

Another highlight of the tour for Bob was the opportunity to open the Crown Casino Christmas Spectacular Event by performing two Crosby Christmas songs, 'It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas' and, of course, 'White Christmas'. Bob's presentation was followed by two songs from an Australian group called "Human Nature", whose album was listed as the number one album in Australia at that time. The evening's entertainment concluded with an appropriate appearance by Santa himself.

Following the engagement in Melbourne, the Pasch's traveled on to Sydney, where David Currington was their gracious host for two days including Christmas Day. David's mother fixed them a nice Christmas dinner, and fellow Crosby club member Rod Poynter and his wife joined in the festivities, which naturally included a hearty dose of Bing Crosby music and good conversation.

As Bob said in his letter to me, "I think everyone has to promote Bing in their own way. I feel I am most fortunate to have the opportunity to keep his music alive and to promote his legacy by doing my tribute shows. I place having the honor of performing five shows with Kathryn Crosby and my trip to Australia to present my Bing show as ranking on the top of my list."

To conclude, Bob offers us a poem he wrote for his 100th Anniversary program at Gonzaga University in 2003. He also read this poem as part of his Australian shows:

A hundred years have come to pass
And we miss your big blue eyes, your pipe, your hat.
We know you're in Heaven
Looking down on us now
And we must carry on some way, some how,
You left us with thousands of songs that touched our hearts
To hope each one of us still play our part
Let us be grateful for the ways that you cared
And just say thanks, Bing, for the blessings you shared.

Greg Van Beek

Trophies received for Most Outstanding Celebrity Tribute Act presented to Bob Pasch as Bing Crosby and Lynn Roberts as Bob Hope. Award from International Guild of Celebrity Impersonators for 2006. They present awards each year in 12 categories.

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Pat Forster, Midhurst, West Sussex, UK

Many thanks for such an excellent issue of BING – it gets better and better!

However, I must correct the impression given, through no fault of yours, of the concerts given by Bing in 1976. There is a report of a broadcast by Paul Gambaccini on BBC Radio4 on 9th September about them. I did not hear the programme, I must have missed it through having just come home after a long stay in hospital. I am sorry to say that Paul's report is a complete fabrication!

I attended every night at the Palladium (like Gwen Harvey I had waited since the 1930s for this) and never during the entire two weeks did Bing leave "the stage and walk among the audience." Paul's final comment "that he thought of Bing standing in the aisle and looking at me for three seconds" was just not right.

(Editor: I must admit to some surprise when I heard Paul say that Bing had left the stage, as that was simply not his style. Perhaps it was that Bing simply looked down at Paul from the stage and made eye contact. Despite that slight exaggeration, it was a very good programme but thanks Pat for pointing out the facts.)

Keith Parkinson, St. Helens, UK

Thanks for BING 144. For me the most interesting article was "Bing's Radio Ratings". It was what I like to find in the magazine: a new slant on the information we already hold on Bing. Just as importantly it contained facts rather than speculation. And it was obviously well researched.

John Kobylecky's "Bing's British Hits 1945-48" explored another facet of Crosbyana that hasn't been tackled before. Because of the absence of sales figures it had to be a speculative approach to the subject but it was a reasoned attempt to put sales of the Brunswick 78s into some sort of perspective. I did notice one minor mistake. When the sales of "Among My Souvenirs" were discussed John wrote: "Although originally made famous by Hoagy Carmichael in the film *The Best Years of Our Lives*, his version was not made available here." Hoagy sang "Lazy River" in that film and I have not been able to trace any recording he made of "Souvenirs" although the song was featured by others in the film.

Although it is not a topic I would like to run for too long in the magazine, as Norman Wolfe suggested a contest to determine the worst song Crosby ever sang, I thought I would put my bid in. In equal place are "Seven Nights A Week" and "What Do We Do With The World".

Ian Arnott, Inverness, Scotland.

Thanks for the latest BING which was nice and early. Many great articles – it's amazing after all this time that so much material is available. I really liked the picture of Bing when he was interviewed by the German lady – such a happy face.

Len Hawkings, Ashton, Bristol, UK

Just a few lines to thank you and the team for a great magazine. It must involve a lot of work. Great picture of Bing on the front cover of the latest issue, handsome fella then. I wonder how old he was?

(Editor: The photo was taken in the latter half of 1935 which means Bing was 32.)

Frank Startup, Cirencester, Glos. UK

I have come across some rather unusual references to Bing Crosby which, if you haven't already seen them, might interest you and fellow members.

The first two I found while looking through indexes in bookshops for Bing references - I'll ignore the cries of 'get a life'. In a biography of Marlon Brando called 'Brando Unzipped' by Darwin Porter, there is an astonishing anecdote about a fistfight between Brando and Crosby over Grace Kelly's favours which reports Brando subsequently boasting to friends that he floored the voice which sang 'White Christmas'. The title of the book and its literary style gives a fair indication of its accuracy and attention to authenticity, but it's a hell of a story. I won't be buying the book, though.

On a happier note, Leslie Phillip's autobiography 'Hello' refers to Leslie Phillips meeting 'the great Frank Sinatra' and 'the even greater Bing Crosby' and has some wonderful things to say about Crosby's warmth, intelligence, courtesy and consideration for others. Apparently, he and Leslie Phillips met whenever Crosby was in the country

I came across and bought a 'Rough Guide to Frank Sinatra' by Chris Ingham which has, as should be expected, many references to Bing, and I thought rather a good evaluation headed 'Crosby versus Sinatra', which I've photo-copied and enclose here. I hope you enjoy it.

Finally, a mystery - at least, to me. I rented and watched a 1955 film called 'Tight Spot' starring Ginger Rogers and Edward G Robinson, and recognised Kathryn Grant in a short scene with Brian Keith and someone else about a third into the film. This film doesn't appear on any list of her films which I've seen - unless I've missed it - and her name doesn't appear in the credits, although the name of a Katherine Anderson

does: unfortunately, the print I saw didn't include the cast list, so I can't match the character's name to that of the actress.

(Editor: A check of the Internet Movie Database reveals that Kathryn did appear in 'Tight Spot'. Her character was 'Bit Girl Honeymooner' and she was not credited in the cast list.

The Sinatra book does indeed have a balanced evaluation of Bing and Frank and we have reproduced this in the 'Books 'N Bing' section)

Graham Pascoe, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

Bing's been mentioned in the press here recently.

The *Weekend Australian* of 21/22 October included an article 'Plum and the Prince' about P. G. Wodehouse and Oscar Wilde. The anniversaries of their birth had just passed and Peter Craven wrote of their literary wit. His comments on Wilde included:

"There's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, there are even fables and fairytales. Orson Welles and Bing Crosby haunted the childhoods of yesteryear with their recording of *The Happy Prince*, that animation of Christianity without dogma that encapsulates all the sacrifice and all the mercy in the world. It will be read to children when Harry Potter is a period piece."

John Stiles, Pinner, Middlesex, UK

Firstly, I wish to thank all the 'team' and contributors in the UK, USA and elsewhere for attaining am incredibly high standard for each issue of BING. Apart from the enjoyment of receiving it, there has been the opportunity to allow us access to a number of high-class books (not least of which is "Diary of a Lifetime") which has given the members a greater insight to the life of a great but unassuming man,

The magazine has also led to the production and development of Jonzo recordings. We members have been and are so fortunate to be able to purchase these LPs and subsequent CDs. The quality of these, together with the detailed notes which accompany them, is unbelievably good. It is now possible to hear the developing maturity of Bing Crosby through the 1920s and into the glorious 1930s. No praise can be too high for John McNicholas and colleagues. I recall in the late 1940s trying to purchase from the great Foyles (in Charing Cross Road) some HMV 'Bing's' which were still catalogued. After months of enquiring, Foyles finally confirmed that these 78s were unobtainable. Now, many years later, all these are readily available on Jonzo. I now have all Jonzos to date and it is sad to learn that sales have been disappointing.

Pinner has a small music group and on the first Wednesday of each month, a record presentation is made at the Village Hall which can hold only 40 or so people. The hall is available for 2 hours and the presentation is limited to $1^1/4$ to $1^1/2$ hours. On the 7th February I am introducing "Early Bing and Contemporaries" and I hope to squeeze in a programme of 23 recordings, although I can cut it shorter if necessary. I hope the audience will not complain about 16 'Bings' (although they include the Mills Brothers, Connie Boswell, and brother Bob). We shall see. I intend to have on show the winter edition of BING. That picture, if enhanced, is so splendid.

John R. Teale, Wythenshawe, Manchester, UK.

I have been an avid collector of Bing Crosby records for more than sixty years, and due to the changes in manufacturing processes I possess, or at least I thought I possessed nearly all the Crosby 78 rpm recordings. I also possess a large collection of LPs and 45 rpm recordings. Since the advent of the CD I have continued purchasing all the Crosby recordings available at my local dealers and on many cases I have ordered recordings mentioned in BING.

. . . Last week I received the latest releases JZCD 46 and JZCD 47. There are twenty three tracks on JZCD 46 and twenty six tracks on JZCD 47. Previous issues have improved my collection by recording fluff takes and by producing on CD what I only had on 78 rpm or LP. However, these recent releases really made me sit up when I began to catalogue them. I have a catalogue of my recordings on a program on my computer and I settled down to enter the details and I was amazed to realize the following details, as far as my collection is concerned.

Out of the forty nine records, twenty two were on CD for the first time. I must stress that these statements are only referring to my collection as there might be other CDs of which I am not aware. However, I was elated and that elation was dissipated when I later read the receipt on which was the statement: - 'Owing to poor sales JZCD 50/51 will be the final discs in this series'.

This caused me to phone the record producer, John McNicholas to enquire why he was stopping such a marvellous project. He commented that he was only selling a hundred copies of each record in this country and that he would need to sell at least five times that quantity to make the project an economic proposition.

I was amazed that there was such a small demand for this project. I know that the records are frequently favourably mentioned in BING; but I wonder if our members really appreciate what a marvellous series this is. Furthermore, is it possible to garner some of the general record buyers by mentioning the series on a Web-site? It would be a tragedy if this magnificent project folded for the want of the support of our organisation.

(Editor: Good news! The Chronological series will continue – see Keeping Track for details.)

FRED REYNOLDS (1915 – 2006) – Collector Extraordinaire!

It was with great sadness, if not surprise, that I heard the news of Fred Reynolds' death. He was 91 and had been in poor health for some time before he died in a Staffordshire nursing home on 28 October.

When I first joined the ICC as a raw teenager in the late 1960s, Fred Reynolds was already a legend in the world of Crosbyana. His knowledge of Bing's career, particularly on record and in films, was second to none and it was our great good fortune that Fred found the time, energy and perseverance to share that knowledge with us. First came his definitive account of Bing on film (*The Road To Hollywood,* 1973, revised and enlarged 1986), and then his *piece de resistance,* the epic 5-volume *Crosby Collection*. This work built upon Fred's co-authorship of the first Crosby discographical "bible", *The Road To Bing Crosby*, and presented an authoritative review of every single Crosby recording, from 1926 to 1977. Fred's son, Michael in a letter to the club, says that writing the *Collection* had always been his father's dream. How satisfied Fred must have felt at following his dream and how grateful we are all grateful that he did; a gratitude that was also shared by Bing.

Fred meets Bing in London in October 1960.

Fred was an introverted character and not one for seeking centre stage at a Crosby gathering. His contributions generally came with the pen and were always well researched, argued and articulated. He was Telegraph rather than tabloid in style, although the seriousness of the civil service frontage concealed a wry sense of humour. His early sixties piece *To Frid From Frunk* was a hilarious send-up of the typing skills (or not) of the then editor, in the days when the magazine rolled off a hand-turned duplicator.

By the time my stint as editor of *BING* came around, we had moved into the world of typesetting, glossy photos and an international readership. Fred was a regular contributor and I'm sure in the world of journalism, there are many editors who would sympathise with my difficulties in managing my "star" columnist. Fred wasn't one to take editorial direction or concede space to others that he thought should be his. We crossed swords on more than one occasion.

But he bore no grudges and when a few years later I found myself researching my book on Michael Holliday, Fred welcomed me to his home with open arms. Mike had befriended Fred along with several eminent Crosby collectors and had been a regular visitor to Fred's Birmingham home. For my visit, Fred had waiting on his dining room table, a neat, tidy, indexed file containing letters, press cuttings and anything else relevant to a friendship with Mike that had existed 40 years before. When he took me to the small room that housed his Bing collection, I had a glimpse inside Pandora's Box, built around a filing system that would not have been out of place in the British Library. Happily, Michael Reynolds is keeping the collection together although is still working out the detailed sub-structure that underpins his father's filing.

It was the light classical music that his late wife had loved that sustained Fred's final years rather than Bing. Perhaps after *The Crosby Collection*, he felt that there were no longer any challenges for him in the Crosby world, whilst the passing of many old friends in the ICC also brought sadness. They had, he said, been "in it" together.

At that last meeting with Fred, I took my copy of *Road To Hollywood* along with me that day and Fred signed it thus:

> *To Ken – With all good wishes and for your continued pleasure in listening and watching Bing (and Mike!).*
>
> *Fred Reynolds. 14 March 2002*

Ah yes, I will remember him well.

Ken Crossland

John Bignell, Wembley, Middlesex, UK

It was with much sorrow that I heard (from his daughter Carol Gibson) just before Christmas of the passing of Fred Reynolds.

Fred and I had a lively correspondence over many years and of course his monumental and unique five-volume work "The Crosby Collection" has an honourable place on my bookshelf. This will remain as an all time tribute to one of Bing's greatest admirers and biographers. One of the joys of being a member of the

ICC is the friendships it has created and I have indeed lost one of the most treasured among so many.

And so another stalwart Bing admirer has departed, but his unique work will live on for all time in his memory. We all owe Fred our eternal gratitude for his diligence and wonderful contribution to the Crosby legacy.

(Editor: I was another who beat a path to Fred's door on occasion as did Gary Giddins back in 1992. Fred was a fascinating man and we shall miss him. His contribution to the documentation of Bing's career was immense.

Ken mentioned the article 'To Frid From Frunk'. This was written at the time when Frank Murphy was Editor of BING. In those days, BING was typed out on stencils which were then duplicated and I think it is true to say that Frank was not a trained typist. We got used to his typing errors and occasionally erratic spelling. Frank was very good natured about the leg-pulling he endured, so much so that he actually published this most amusing article by Fred Reynolds highlighting his defects. This article was originally published in BING 12 in 1968 and it is only right to reproduce it again as a tribute to Fred.

TO FRID FROM FRUNK

It is not, you will understand, my purpose to give concern to the many regular readers who rejoice in happy association but I must report that my relations with Frank Murphy the editor are becoming less cordial. And it is all his own fault. We used to be so friendly: "Murphy", I would say, "that's a good little magazine you've got; well done my good man."

"Thank you kindly", he would instantly reply touching his cap, "You are the brightest jewel in its crown."

What then has caused the rift in the rapport? Nothing less than that secretly, and underhandedly, he has been taking instructions on how to type. For many years I held the undisputed distinction of being the world's worst typist, the opprobrium from which kept me awake at night for long seconds. I held the championship against all comers, was even worse than the office typist and possibly the most stupendous failure since the Edsel motor car. Then one day, long ago, out of the blue of the night, I received from Frank my first letter. It filled me with pleasure quite apart from the sunny nature of the contents. I gazed with rapture at the pages, and if it wasn't a real psychedelic experience it was the nearest thing to it, without actually taking LSD.

"Deer Frid" it began. "I wus hippy§ get etc. etc." You will be quick to see what a boost this was to my ailing ego. After much perseverance I had reached, with the 'pick and peck' system, a top speed of 14 words a minute with only seven errors, but I still couldn't persuade myself that I was good. All practice had brought nothing but despair but now, in a thrice, the whole scene had changed. The spelling in Frank's letters was of such appalling insensitivity and the appearance of it so bizarre that the task of deciphering it might have seemed hopeless. Not so but far otherwise and atrophied indeed would my imagination have been if it had not leapt at the prospect held out, the letter would have repaid not only deciphering but setting to music.

The first letter became for me a thing of beauty to exceed anything that inspired Keats. I had it framed and set in a prominent position and whenever I felt low would fondly gaze upon it. So through the years our correspondence blossomed. Early letters from him were decoded only after numerous alphabetical permutations and invariably contained the "Frid" salutation and the concluding "Weby jest vithes, Frunk".

When I once mentioned to Frank that I had somehow managed to get my finger stuck between L, 0 and P he cheerfully urged me "nit to wurry" as he had twice had his thumb under the roller. It is true, of course, that my own success was still less then total but I recall fondly how I sent him a subscription when I thought he was starting another club for somebody called "Wing Crumby". I remember too, that he once informed me that a new record had been issued in the CLP series and I had a large city store turn out three branches and a warehouse before I realised that he meant CBS.

That was my fault, of course, for by now we knew each other's form and our only real difficulties were caused by vital words being incorrectly typed. It came as no surprise when he referred to the "immoral Bing" as in our two-man super league one dropped letter presents no problem at all, but a stranger reading our correspondence would never crack the code. If SMERSH had used the system it would have driven 007 out of business before he could say "Dr. No".

"Dear Frunj" I would say. "Di let me know whin to send thi stenvil" and he would reply "Dwar Frid. Kot mr jabe ut as qyiclly ad piddable". (You will see how superior was my skill). In 'CALL ME LUCKY', Bing said he was variously called "Bing Crovony" and "Bim Crossland" but Frank's letters reached imaginative heights reserved for rarer minds. I rather liked his "Bang Bromby" and his succulent reference to Bing's recording of "Mu osle if gilded creams" was most refreshing. Later, when Frank told me that he would "white before Xmaz" I realised that he had struck yet again.

A friend of mine, a director of a small firm of stationers, lets me have Correctine cheaply and usually sends me a complimentary bottle for each article I write. I understand that Frank raised some funds for the club by selling my colourful stencils as abstract works of art, reminiscent of Pablo Picasso's pink period. It will, I am sure, be difficult for you to keep a dry eye in your appreciation of my extreme concern in receiving from the perfidious Murphy recent letters showing a marked improvement in his typing ability. Not only does this

seriously undermine the esoteric value of our exchanges but it also relegates me to my former position. I can conclude only that he is jealous of my skill and has resorted to secret lessons and practice or that he has just discovered that he should remove his gloves (sneer! sneer!). Unfortunately, just as I was about to say something really nasty and work in a little appropriate invective, I find that I have come to thi and ob my lazt byttle of cOrrictyne flued. Jost my lick.

FRID R?YN&1DS

Bing and Bowie: An Odd Story of Holiday Harmony

An article by Paul Farhi of the Washington Post on December 20 had quite a wide circulation and we should like to share it with you with due acknowledgments to the writer and the newspaper.

One of the most successful duets in Christmas music history—and surely the weirdest—might never have happened if it weren't for some last-minute musical surgery. David Bowie thought "The Little Drummer Boy" was all wrong for him. So when the producers of Bing Crosby's Christmas TV special asked Bowie to sing it in 1977, he refused.

Just hours before he was supposed to go before the cameras, though, a team of composers and writers frantically retooled the song. They added another melody and new lyrics as a counterpoint to all those pah-rumpa-pum-pums and called it "Peace on Earth." Bowie liked it. More important, Bowie sang it.

The result was an epic, and epically bizarre, recording in which David Bowie, the androgynous Ziggy Stardust, joined in song with none other than Mr. "White Christmas" himself, Bing Crosby.

In the intervening years, the Bowie-Crosby, "Peace on Earth/Little Drummer Boy," has been transformed from an oddity into a holiday chestnut. You can hear it in heavy rotation on Christmas-music radio stations or see the performance on Internet video sites. First released as a single in 1982, it still sells today—to add to its quirky afterlife, it's part of an album that's ranked as high as No. 3 on the Canadian charts this month. How did this almost surreal mash-up of the mainstream and the avant-garde, of cardigan-clad '40s-era crooner and glam rocker, happen?

It almost didn't. Bowie, who was 30 at the time, and Crosby, then 73, recorded the duet Sept. 11, 1977, for Crosby's "Merrie Olde Christmas" TV special. A month later, Crosby was dead of a heart attack. The special was broadcast on CBS about a month after his death.

The notion of pairing the resolutely white-bread Crosby with the exquisitely offbeat Bowie apparently was the brainchild of the TV special's producers, Gary Smith and Dwight Hemion, according to Ian Fraser, who co-wrote (with Larry Grossman) the song's music and arranged it.

Crosby was in Great Britain on a concert tour, and the theme of the TV special was Christmas in England. Bowie was one of several British guest stars (the model Twiggy and "Oliver!" star Ron Moody also appeared). Booking Bowie made logistical sense, since the special was taped near his home in London, at the Elstree Studios. As perhaps an added inducement, the producers agreed to air the arty video of Bowie's then-current single, "Heroes" (Crosby introduced it).

It's unclear, however, whether Crosby had any idea who Bowie was. Buz Kohan, who wrote the special and worked with Fraser and Grossman on the music, says he was never sure Crosby knew anything about Bowie's work. Fraser has a slightly different memory: "I'm pretty sure he did [know]. Bing was no idiot. If he didn't, his kids sure did."

Kohan worked some of the intergenerational awkwardness into his script. In a little skit that precedes the singing, Crosby greets Bowie at the door of what looks like Dracula's castle (actually, it's a set that's supposed to be Crosby's rented London home). The conceit is that Bowie is dropping by a friend's house and finds Crosby at home one snowy afternoon. They banter for a bit and then get around to a piano. Bowie casually picks out a piece of sheet music of "The Little Drummer Boy" and declares, "This is my son's favorite."

The original plan had been for Bowie and Crosby to sing just "Little Drummer Boy." But "David came in and said: 'I hate this song. Is there something else I could sing?'" Fraser said. "We didn't know quite what to do."

Fraser, Kohan and Grossman left the set and found a piano in the studios' basement. In about 75 minutes, they wrote "Peace on Earth," an original tune, and worked out an arrangement that weaved together the two songs. Bowie and Crosby nailed the performance with less than an hour of rehearsal.

And that was almost that. "We never expected to hear about it again," Kohan said.

But after the recording circulated as a bootleg for

several years, RCA decided to issue it as a single in 1982. It has since been packaged and repackaged in Christmas compilation albums and released as a DVD. It's still the most played Christmas duet on WASH-FM (97.1), airing once or twice a day when the station plays nothing but holiday music, said Bill Hess, WASH's program director. Hess likes how the two men blend their voices. The real clincher, he says, is Crosby, who has been associated with holiday music for generations. "'White Christmas' really helps sell it," he says.

Also among the song's fans is Roger D. Launius, who remembers watching the original Crosby TV special while he was a graduate student and the parent of two children, ages 1 and 3.

"It was a very hectic time in my life, and the song was very peaceful and beautiful," says Launius, chairman of the space history division at the National Air and Space Museum. "I don't remember anything else about the special, but I remembered that song."

Launius hadn't given it too much thought until about seven years ago, when his now-adult daughter sent him a Christmas CD. Among the selections was the Bowie-Crosby duet.

The other day at his office, Launius checked the hard drive on his computer. Yep, there it was. With a couple of clicks, Launius let the warm harmony, and the memories, come flooding back. Readers still dreaming of 'White Christmas' as their holiday fave.

Paul Farhi

Editor: The song received some attention on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum too. Greg Van Beek started it off with:

"What a great way to ring in 2007 and the 30th anniversary of this classic duet! I couldn't believe what I saw when I opened today's edition of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel newspaper. I always check out the record charts each week, as presented by SoundScan and Billboard magazine. Under Top Singles, the Top Five singles for the week ending December 24th went as follows:

(The first number is the local chart position, based on sales in 10 southeastern Wisconsin counties, the second number is the national chart position for the United States):
1.) 3.) Foxworthy/Engvall: Redneck "12 Days of Christmas"
2.) 2.) Katherine McPhee: "Somewhere Over The Rainbow"
3.) 8.) Enya: "Oiche Chiun (Silent Night)"
4.) 21.) Bowie/Crosby: "Peace On Earth/Little Drummer Boy"
4.) 12.) Iron Maiden: "Different World"

So Bing & Bowie were tied for fourth place locally with heavy-metal rock band Iron Maiden! How cool is that! Evidently there were a lot of folks buying Bing's Christmas swan song here in southeastern Wisconsin the week before Christmas. I would imagine this chart includes or is comprised of downloads at iTunes, etc., as I don't believe there is a new CD single available of Drummer Boy in retail outlets. I always have to smile whenever I hear this song on radio—and it was heard a lot this past month. How wonderful that, as his time was running out, Bing was able to give the world one last Christmas classic before he left us just four short weeks later. The magic and the voice was intact right up to the end. It was a 'pretty thing' indeed, Bing!"

"Brian W" responded with:

> "Very interesting, Greg, but don't be misled. Billboard's Hot Singles Sales chart includes few downloads, unless they are packaged as a two-or-more track downloadable single. The chart is primarily comprised of CD singles and the very limited 12-inch vinyl singles that are available. "Peace on Earth/Little Drummer Boy" is still available as a CD single on the Oglio label, which is the label listed on the Billboard chart:
>
> However, the #1 selling CD single has not surpassed 4,000 copies in a week for a very long time (with the exception of American Idol product). So for position #21, we're likely talking about a few hundred copies. For reference, someone who has access to SoundScan figures posts the top 200 of the Hot Digital Songs chart (with actual totals) every week on a bulletin board I frequent, and the #200 song sold over 4,000 copies. The top two songs both sold over 100,000 copies. If you factored in sales of the CD single of "Peace On Earth/Little Drummer Boy," it would probably rank below #1000 on the chart. I believe the song is available as a download from albums it's featured on, and it did not rank in the top 200.
>
> In a related note, "White Christmas" did not make the Top 40 in sales as a download this year, but it has sold a total of 153,869 so far, with sales of 12,553 last week. So while it's refreshing to see "Peace on Earth/Little Drummer Boy" on a pop chart, the Hot 100 Singles Sales chart has little meaning in today's world, and, according to Billboard's Fred Bronson, it will likely be discontinued soon, or folded into the downloads chart."

Collecting Legends – White Christmas & Hot Rhythms

Cyril Stansfield of Birstall, Batley sent in this extract from *The Best Of Britain* magazine for December 2006

With Christmas approaching once again we'll no doubt be hearing many versions of Irving Berlin's seasonal song 'White Christmas'. My personal memories of the song includes a chance sighting of Bing Crosby in Yorkshire in the Sixties, having grown up enjoying the various 'hot' rhythms that punctuated his films.

When riding along the perimeter of tiny Pocklington aerodrome in north Yorkshire on my Lambretta motor-scooter, I noticed a small group of smartly dressed people bidding farewell to someone and was astonished to see that the focus of their attention was Bing Crosby. I watched enthralled from the edge of the airstrip as he shook hands with his hosts before climbing into a small

12-seater propeller plane, having spent the day at York races.

As the plane slowly took off in my direction he waved to his hosts from the window, then noticing me staring up at him he waved at me and grinned, causing me to drop my helmet on the ground and to wave back excitedly.

Whereas most lads of my age in the Sixties had no real interest in Bing Crosby, I had always enjoyed his rhythmic melodies and that of Al Jolson and other Hollywood greats who introduced what used to be known as 'black' music into their songs, though it was actually jazz & blues. This interest was probably encouraged by my father who as a young soldier had been stationed in Bermuda for two years in the heyday of American musicals. When I was small he would sing along to old black and white musicals on TV whilst I would be captivated by the various jazz, blues and swing numbers, with which many of these films were interspersed, performed by artists such as Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra.

So, to casually come across the legendary Bing Crosby standing around in a Yorkshire village seemed quite unreal at the time.

John McGhee

BING ON THE BOX

Here's Bert Bishop with his usual round-up of what's been on TV and radio.

BING FILMS SHOWN ON TELEVISION IN THE USA & CANADA SINCE THE LAST ISSUE
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Nov. 14, TCM
Alias Jesse James, Nov. 17 & Jan. 30, Encore Western
Blue Skies, Feb. 18, TCM
Going Hollywood, Jan. 3, TCM
Going My Way, shown on several different stations.
Here Comes the Groom, Jan. 2, TCM
High Society, Oct. 22, TCM
High Time, Nov. 13, AMC
Holiday Inn, shown on several different stations.
Let's Make Love, shown on several different stations.
Man on Fire, Jan. 2, TCM
Pepe, Feb. 19, TCM
Stagecoach, shown on several different stations.
The Bells of St. Mary's, shown on several different stations.
The Country Girl, Oct. 25, Dec. 7, 14, Cinemax
The Honeymooners in Hollywood, Feb. 10, American Life TV
The Princess and the Pirate, Feb. 16, TCM
Warner Brothers Cartoon Caricatures of Bing Crosby from the 1930s, Dec. 16, TCM
White Christmas, shown on several different stations.

And how nice to see the AT&T National Pro-Am still advertised as the 'Bing Crosby Pro-Am', when it was shown in February on INHD.

In the UK, the More4 channel showed *The Bells of St. Mary's*, and Living TV showed *White Christmas* and *Anything Goes*, the 1956 version, while TCM obliged with its regular *High Society* screening. Compared with America and Canada this dearth of Bing films on U.K. television continues to be most disappointing. Although it can be reported that *Road to Bali* was on the Five US channel which is one of the Freeview digital channels. With Freeview and satellite channels proliferating at a rate of knots surely there is room for a dedicated vintage / musical films channel?

The TCM screening of the Warner Brothers cartoons referred to above must be unique and well worth obtaining as some of these have been available in poor condition only. Did anybody out there record it? Similarly, I have yet to encounter a complete copy of *Pepe*, another TCM offering.

GREAT CHRISTMAS FILMS

On Christmas Day in the U.K., right after the Queen's speech, ITV screened an hour long programme, hosted by Phillip Schofield, entitled 'The Ten Best Christmas Films'. As there was no prior indication as to which they would be this was an obvious occasion to set the video recorder in the hope that a Crosby movie would be in there somewhere. From the point of view of regular Yuletide screening there was a vague feeling that *It's A Wonderful Life* would be the firm favourite. But when that came in at No.4 apprehension began to set in, especially as another perennial favourite, *The Snowman* followed in the No.3 spot. But at last, not overlooked by that doyen of film reviewers, Barry Norman, *White Christmas* hit the No.2 spot. Mr. Norman was to say that it is the classic Christmas film because it has the greatest of all Christmas songs sung by Bing Crosby with the finale being the highlight of the film. Other celebrity contributors were seen and heard between clips from all ten films and of that No.2 film they made very appreciative comments:

Melvyn Hayes, actor: "My favourite Christmas film is *White Christmas*. It has all the ingredients. It's magic!" Incidentally, Mr. Hayes starred in the No.7 spot which was *Santa Claus – The Movie*.

Patsy Kensit, actress: "...me and my Mum sitting down on a cold December day, maybe a week before Christmas, and thinking wouldn't it be perfect if we got the white Christmas? It's just perfect."

Debra Stephenson, actress: "To me it's just the ideal thing to do at Christmas; settle down after Christmas dinner; a glass of port, mince pie, roaring fire and watch *White Christmas*. It's lovely!"

Amanda Holden, actress: "The film has stacks of classic songs but only one you came away remembering! Ironically, the best relationship in that film is between

Bing and Rosie in the classic Christmas film.

Danny Kaye and Bing Crosby. Their performance in drag of 'Sisters' is very, very funny."

Jenny Powell, presenter: "There's not a bad song in that movie. The song and dance numbers are fantastic and that is all down to the legendary American composer Irving Berlin."

George Chakiris [actor, and chorus boy in the sequence with Rosemary Clooney singing 'Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me']: "That was a time I really treasure. It was wonderful!"

And, finally;

Mary Crosby, who opined: "*White Christmas* came out of another movie which was *Holiday Inn* which was wonderfully successful and Paramount decided to do another movie with Dad again, Rosemary Clooney, Danny Kaye and Vera-Ellen. My Dad loved that song and it turned out to be his greatest grossing film. I think that my Dad's voice was unique, but also the way he chose to sing it. As his children we tired of hearing it in June, at school, but I don't think he ever tired of singing it."

As a matter of interest, *Miracle On 34th Street*, the re-make with Richard Attenborough as Father Christmas, made the number one spot which, on reflection make the panel's top four choices well justified.

Also on Christmas Day, the cockney boys and girls who inhabit the EastEnders 'soap' took time out from their trials and tribulations and sat down to Christmas dinner to the sound of 'White Christmas' wafting over the wireless airwaves. Had they switched the TV on they may also have seen the Kingsmill bread advertisement which is still being shown. It features a short excerpt from Gone Fishin', the connection I now know is that the bread contains Omega3 - the same nutrient as in fish oil!

SINCERELY YOURS

On the 24th of November, and presented by Billy Cotton junior, BBC4 TV televised a tribute to Dame Vera Lynn who will have reached the venerable age of ninety in March of this year. It is unlikely that there is anyone in the world who reads this magazine who will not know that she was loved and hailed as 'The Forces Sweetheart'. An ordinary lass from the East End of London, Dame Vera was essential listening in war torn Britain and by our troops overseas. The Burma boys never forgot her front-line visits as she brought news and cheer from home. She had a remarkable voice and delivery – pitch perfect and incredible diction, and her voice improved over the years with a power and delivery that was quite amazing. Her inclusion here is on account of a clip that was shown from her 1970s TV series with Bing guesting. They duetted on 'Sing' and Bing sang 'That's What Life Is All About' solo. The programme concluded with an on-stage performance of 'My Way'. Although I have this on LP to see and hear her singing it 'live' was quite remarkable. It knocked Sinatra's version into a cocked hat. We wish her a very Happy Birthday!

Vera with Bing in 1975.

RADIO IN THE UK

'The First Snowfall' of the winter just happens to have occurred on the day that this column was commenced; which means that by the time you read this it is hoped that the weather will have coaxed the daffodils into bloom and be much more spring like! However, by way of an introduction let us call on **Mike Carey** of Memorable Memories BBC Radio Derby [P.O. Box 104.5 Derby DE1 3HL] who, courtesy of member Arthur Blood who had supplied Mike with a 'lesser known Christmas songs' CD, played this seasonal Crosby number in a run up to a remarkable Christmas Eve special which featured the full twenty-eight minutes of the soundtrack songs from Bing and Fred's 1942 film *Holiday Inn*. A dozen or so songs from the 'Mr. Music of America', aka Irving Berlin, must be a good way to celebrate Christmas, surely; especially in the competent hands of Messrs Crosby and Astaire.

Mike Carey is a regular with the calendar songs throughout the year and is always very fulsome of his praise of Bing, promoting the ICC quite frequently. In a 'musical Oscars' programme we had 'Swinging On A Star' and from wireless broadcasts 'The Whiffenpoof Song' from a Jolson hosted KMH and the questionable duet with Lauren Bacall of 'I Don't Know Why', an ironic choice of title in view of Miss Bacall's limited singing abilities. Any problems with a given track, calendar or request, is usually solved by contacting

Arthur or his 'singing detective' Maurice Beardmore! The Christmas Eve special was given a preview a week earlier when he featured the trailer for *Holiday Inn* advising his listeners that they would be hearing the very first performance of the most famous Christmas song which was, of course, Bing singing 'White Christmas' in a duet with Martha Mears, [in the film looking for all the world like Marjorie Reynolds!] who, also, must have been the first woman to have sung this song professionally. All local presenters appreciate feedback in one form or another so even if you don't live within their catchment area it would be no bad thing to write and thank them, or put in a request, knowing that you will have done your bit in keeping Bing's name on the airwaves throughout Britain and the world. Our thanks are due to the likes of Mike and others well known to readers of this column who continue to promote what, otherwise, could be a forgotten talent.

Frank Wappat, who does remarkable things with 78rpm records, hails from Tyneside and is a regular presenter of Stars On Sunday on BBC Radio North. Frank is the founder of the Al Bowlly Society and British dance band enthusiast's magazine *Memory Lane*. But for all that Frank still believes that Bing is the "King of them all!" About the recording 'To See You is To Love You', from *Road To Bali*, he said that Bing was the king of romantic singers and was noted for reading through the score prior to recording as a result of which he had an innate sense of sincerity, a belief in what he was singing. He was the world's greatest, the innovator who originated the art form of singing. However, his selection of Crosby recordings were often up-tempo numbers such as 'Till The End Of The World' from Grady Martin & His Slew Foot Five; 'Someone Stole Gabriel's Horn' with The Dorsey Brothers and 'Deep In The Heart Of Texas' of which track it could be argued that it is a great swing band recording by Woody Herman & The Woodchoppers with vocal refrain by Bing Crosby. Over the weeks Frank played selections from Bing's autobiography and in a 'Bing with the Andrews Sisters' special eight tracks ranging from their very first collaboration, 'Ciribiribin' in September 1939 through to 'Good, Good, Good' in June of 1945 - and all on those old shellac records now lovingly restored! It's all in the size and positioning of the stylus apparently - needles to us of a certain age who still retain our original, treasured 78s!

You've read about **David Lowe** often enough in this column and I'm happy to say his Crosby archives still get a regular airing which is invariably down to popular requests from those who tune in to *As Time Goes By*, his Saturday night programme on BBC Radio Devon 103.4 fm. *Singers And Swingers* gives him a second bite of the cherry on Sundays. Some thirty tracks by Bing since the last report which, bearing in mind there have been only thirty-two programmes since then, means a Bing track just about every show. 'Small Fry' commemorated the twenty-ninth anniversary of Bing's passing on the 14th October; surprisingly not a Johnny Mercer lyric, though typical of his style. In fact Frank Loesser penned the words to Hoagy Carmichael's tune. But Mr. Mercer scored heavily when Bing introduced Johnny's first big hit with 'I'm An Old Cowhand', which David followed up with. Lots of lovely early 'Thirties tracks featured over the ensuing weeks: 'A Ghost Of A Chance', 'Dancing In The Dark' and my own number one 'I Found A Million Dollar Baby [In A Five And Ten Cent Store]'. Many members will know that Bing went under the pseudonym of Arthur Beaumont on the Australian release Embassy EMB E-144 and as Owen Cornell on Panachord PAN 11981, also an Antipodean issue.

'Angel In Disguise' is typical of Bing's KMH renditions and a welcome change from commercial releases, but among the more 'up to date' recordings David featured 'Red River Valley', from the *How The West Was Won* album and for listeners Henry and Min, erstwhile Goon Show fans, the soundtrack version of 'Busy Doing Nothing'. In a programme subtitled 'Another Word In Your Ear' Mr. Lowe featured one word song titles. Girls' names fit easily into that category and Bing sneaked in there with 'Marie' from the Mishel Piastro [Geoff Love] 'Treasury' album.

If you have a computer and an email facility why not spend five minutes of your time in sending a request to **Anne Hopper**? A part of her Sunday *Music Box* programme features Bing in the Crosby Corner. You may not be able to tune in to BBC Radio Cumbria to hear it but at least you will have the satisfaction of knowing you've done your bit in promoting Bing and given encouragement to a likeable presenter who, via member Maggie Ryan, sends a list of her Crosby selections from which it can be noted that she has even outdone David Lowe by playing no less than thirty-one tracks. There have been some really nice solos like 'Two For Tonight' and 'Too Marvellous For Words' but mostly duets, usually with Rosemary Clooney, Peggy Lee, the Andrews Sisters and Louis Armstrong. In that regard, the last few months have also included the likes of Fred Astaire, 'The Thing'; Bob Hope, 'Team Work'; Danny Kaye, in a selection from *White Christmas*, and Bacall and Bogie with that 'Bold Fisherman' number. There were six Bing tracks on a November evening when 'Bing Crosby - The Essential Collection' was reviewed.

Her notes indicate that she also plays Bing on a Monday evening under the pseudonym Harry King!

The email address you'll need is anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk although I'm sure if you wrote directly to Anne, at BBC Radio Cumbria it would get there okay. Of course, the same sentiment applies to any presenter. Email, snailmail, text, the 'phone, or even carrier pigeon. There's no excuse!

THE FORUM

Another address you should be contacting: BBC The Forum, Millennium Plains, Norwich NR2 1BH, whence **Paul Barnes** moseys out each and every Saturday roping in listeners far and wide. If you'd been tuned in you will have heard Bing, Bob Haggart and The Jesters and Vic Schoen and The Andrews Sisters Feudin' And Fightin' At The Flying 'W'. Nobody hurt though, as it was all very harmonious. Paul's not big on ballads or too many Bing solos; however there were some notable exceptions: 'Two For Tonight', a Mack Gordon & Harry Revel classic, 'One, Two, Button Your Shoe' from *Pennies From Heaven* featuring a great arrangement by the Georgie Stoll Orchestra, from *High Time* the Cahn-Van Heusen pensive ballad 'The Second Time Around' and one of Paul's philosophical favourites 'Living One Day At A Time'. Especially for the fifteenth birthday of twins Alice and Amy, who like the music on *Gold For Grown Ups* let it be noted, Paul played 'Pretty Baby'. As Dorothy Parker once said '... men fawn and flatter' but if it means cultivating these young ladies' musical appreciation why not? Among the 'duets', from the wireless 'I Still Suits Me' with Peggy Lee, 'A Little Bird Told Me', frere Bob, some savoury interpolations on an otherwise all Andrews Sisters 'One Meat Ball' and a rendition of one of Hoagy Carmichael's great compositions 'Ole Buttermilk Sky'. Christmas wasn't overlooked either. Take –A of the 1942 release of 'you know what' and what transpired in the film to be non-existent 'Snow' from Bing, Danny, Peggy and Trudy. That one-word title has an interesting history as Berlin penned it as a song called 'Free' for the show *Call Me Madam*. It wasn't the finale hit it was meant to be and, accordingly, Berlin replaced it with what turned out to be the big hit of the show the counter-melody duet 'I Wonder Why / You're Just In Love'. It is more than likely that Irving Berlin took his cue from Bing and Gary Crosby's counter-melody, gold record hit of the time 'Play A Simple Melody', also by Berlin. Never one to waste a good tune Berlin subsequently resurrected 'Free' as 'Snow'!

Paul Barnes always promotes the Jonzo chronological releases including the address whence they may be purchased. Sadly, we learn that the series on the Jonzo label is soon to end though. In view of the huge contribution to the world of Crosbyana that John McNicholas has made with this labour of love, this lack of support borders on the unforgivable. Paul Barnes, aka *Gold For Grown Ups*, may be found on the following locations:

Saturdays, 18.00 until 21.00 (BST) on World Wide Web: www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk or tune in to

BBC Radio Cambs - 95.7 and 96.0 FM
BBC Essex - 95.3 and 103.5 FM
BBC Radio Norfolk - 95.1 and 104.4 FM
BBC Radio Northampton - 103.6 and 104.2 FM
BBC Radio Suffolk - 95.5 and 103.9 and 104.6 FM

A WORD IN YOUR EAR

This time around one word song titles seem to have caught on among presenters, always on the look out for a new theme for their programmes. **Russell Davies** was another one such on Classics And Curiosities, BBC Radio 2 Sundays. Bing committed many four letter words to wax, and not all of them Blue! Among his contributions were 'Soon', 'Rain', 'Iowa' and girlfriends 'Mary' and 'Liza'. But it was 'Snow' and 'Mine', with Judy Garland, that Russell chose to play. I recall contributing an article to Gunn Report GR.28 in 1972 which started a debate on the shortest titles on 78 rpm. My own suggestion was one from the collection 'Who' coupled with 'Nola', featuring the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, totalling a mere seven letters for both sides! Usually associated with the wartime Russell pointed out that 'I'll Be Seeing You' was actually written a year before the outbreak of hostilities in 1938.

Can't recall ever hearing 'Oh, You Crazy Moon' on the wireless before. It was left to **Bill and Angela Rennells** to rectify that on their *Harmony Night* farrago of popular music. They are among the recipients of the Jonzo series and this track appears on Vol. 47. At the time of compiling the encyclopaedia *Bing - Just For The Record* this track remained unissued perhaps explained by the fact that Bing's rendition is just a little lacklustre. But it's a nice song, nonetheless, and deserves a place in every member's Crosby collection. Other less likely tracks on their programme were a duet with Burl Ives from a wireless programme; 'On Top Of Old Smokey', 'Helpless' [a typical Russ Morgan accompaniment]and 'I've Got My Captain Working For Me Now'. Keying in the wrong track number and getting 'Cuba' Bill quickly reverted to that military reversal song commenting that Cuba is not the healthiest place to visit right now!

Exactly seventy years old this year to the month, as this is typed, is 'Have You Met Miss Jones?' which Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart composed for the hit show *I'd Rather Be Right*. Recorded in 1956 with the Buddy Bregman Orchestra, Bing's take on this musical enquiry could well quality as the definitive male version; though Ella's is arguably the all-time best. That was one of a few tracks played by David Jacobs; others were Bing trying hard to persuade Rosemary Clooney not to end their relationship with 'Love Won't Let You Get Away' and noting that he was in financial credit with 'I've Got Five Dollars'. I think everybody was aware of that already!

Howard Leader up there in BBC Radio Lincolnshire likes a bit of Bing and chipped in with the wireless version of 'Once And For Always' with Miss Lee and that long title from *Guys & Dolls* - you know the one, where there's a problem finding somewhere to shoot crap – especially not the police station. 'Sweet Lorraine' and 'Home Cookin'' were also on the menu.

See you in the summer!

Bert Bishop 23rd February 2007

(Editor: Thanks, Bert. In the UK, we have been spoiled by the amount of radio coverage given to Bing in the past but there has been a noticeable shift in recent months in the nationwide broadcasts of BBC Radio2. Formerly loyal supporters like Desmond Carrington and David Jacobs rarely play Bing nowadays and Michael Parkinson never includes Bing on his Sunday broadcasts. Fortunately Russell Davies slots in a Bing now and then but otherwise we have got to thank the local radio presenters for keeping Bing on the air. In an effort to stem the tide, I prepared special CDs of Bing material for Parkinson and Jacobs which suited their types of programme but these were neither acknowledged nor used. Clearly the playlist dictated by those running Radio 2 causes problems but the current situation is worrying.)

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Frankie Laine, the big-voiced singer whose string of hits made him one of the most popular entertainers in the 1950s, died on February 6. He was 93. With songs such as "That's My Desire," "Mule Train," "Jezebel," "I Believe," and "That Lucky Old Sun," he was a regular feature of the Top Ten in the years just before rock 'n' roll ushered in a new era of popular music. Many may remember him best for singing the theme to the television show *Rawhide*, which ran from 1959 to 1966, and the theme for the 1974 movie *Blazing Saddles*. He is said to have sold more than 100 million records and earned more than 20 gold records. Laine said his musical influences included Bing, Al Jolson and a goodly number of jazz artists, such as Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong and Billie Holliday. His variety show *Frankie Laine Time* ran for two summers, 1955 and 1956, on CBS, and he also appeared in a number of films, including *When You're Smiling*, and *Sunny Side of the Street*.

Laine was born Francesco Paolo LoVecchio on March 30, 1913, in Chicago, the son of a barber who emigrated from Sicily. He struggled from his teens until well into his 30s - even having to earn a living as a marathon dancer - before hits began coming his way with "That's My Desire" in 1947. He had replaced Perry Como as vocalist with the Freddie Carlone band in 1937 and his big breakthrough came when Hoagy Carmichael heard him sing in a Los Angeles nightclub and praised his work. It is surprising that Frankie and Bing did not work together more but their only professional appearance together was on Bing's Philco show on November 26, 1947. They did, however, often meet at social events such as the Tournament of Champions in Las Vegas in the mid-fifties where this photograph was taken.

Frankie wrote a nice letter to Gonzaga for the Crosby Centennial celebration in 2003 and this is what he said:

> Nancy Martin wrote me about the wonderful celebration of Bing Crosby's birth, which you will be having on May 16. I'm sorry I can't attend. In the early 1930's, when I was dancing and singing at the popular Marathons, I was singing mainly Bing Crosby tunes like "I Surrender Dear", and "Straight From The Shoulder, Right From The Heart." At the time, crooning was a brand new thing, and I was just knocked out by Bing's sound.
>
> It's still a great sound. Happy 100th, Bing!
>
> God bless
>
> Frankie Laine

Ray Evans, whose long collaboration with songwriting partner Jay Livingston produced a string of hits that included the Oscar-winning "Buttons and Bows," "Mona Lisa" and "Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera)," died of an apparent heart attack on February 15. He was 92. Considered among Hollywood's greatest songwriters, Livingston and Evans wrote songs for dozens of movies, most of them at Paramount, where they were under contract from 1945 to 1955. With Livingston providing the melodies and Evans writing the lyrics, the team wrote 26 songs that reportedly sold more than 1 million copies each. In addition to their three Oscar-winning songs, Livingston and Evans earned four other Oscar nominations - for "The Cat and the Canary" from *Why Girls Leave Home* (1945); "Tammy," sung by Debbie Reynolds in *Tammy and the Bachelor* (1957); "Almost in Your Arms" from *Houseboat* (1958), and "Dear Heart" from the movie of the same name (1964). Among Livingston and Evans' songs, which reportedly have sold a total of nearly 500 million copies, is the Christmas standard "Silver Bells." Introduced in the 1951 Bob Hope-Marilyn Maxwell comedy *The Lemon Drop Kid*, "Silver Bells" is said to have been recorded by nearly 150 artists and has sold more than 160 million copies.

The son of a secondhand paper, string and burlap dealer, Evans was born in Salamanca, N.Y., on Feb. 4, 1915. After graduating from high school, where he played clarinet in the school band and served as valedictorian, Evans earned a degree in economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. While at the university, he met Livingston, a journalism major from Pennsylvania who had studied piano as a child. They began their songwriting collaboration in

New York City and had their first success in 1941 when their song "G'Bye Now" was incorporated into Olsen and Johnson's zany Broadway revue "Hellzapoppin'." and landed on "Your Hit Parade."

In 1944, the two songwriters came out to Hollywood, where they had a hit with Betty Hutton's recording of "Stuff Like That There." They earned their first Oscar nomination with "The Cat and the Canary." Under contract to Paramount, the duo wrote one of the biggest hits of 1946: the title song for the Olivia de Havilland movie "To Each His Own," the basic framework of which began with Evans' phrase "two lips must insist on two more to be kissed." For one week in 1946, five versions of "To Each His Own" were listed on Billboard's Top 10 list, with recordings by Eddy Howard (No. 1), Tony Martin, Freddy Martin, the Modernaires and the Ink Spots.

Livingston and Evans picked up their first Oscar for the bouncy "Buttons and Bows," which was introduced by Bob Hope in the 1948 comedy western *The Paleface* and was recorded by Dinah Shore, among others. The Oscar-winning "Mona Lisa," which they wrote for *Captain Carey, U.S.A.*, a 1950 drama starring Alan Ladd, remained Evans' favorite song. The song originally was called "Prima Donna," but they changed the title at the suggestion of Evans' wife, Wyn, who thought "Mona Lisa" sounded much nicer. In the movie, the song is sung by a blind Italian street singer to send a signal to Italian partisans during World War II and is heard only in fragments. But Evans and Livingston felt that if they could play the song for Nat King Cole, they might be able to convince him to record it. "So Paramount Studio, who owned the song, pulled some strings and [Cole] allowed us to come to his home and play it for him, in 1950," Evans recalled in a 1993 interview with the Buffalo News. "Mona Lisa" became an enormous hit. "It was so different and so unusual," Evans said. "It's hardly ever dropped in popularity and it's given me a lot of credit and ego."

After leaving Paramount to work as freelancers in 1955, Livingston and Evans won their third Oscar for "Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera)," which was sung by Doris Day in Alfred Hitchcock's 1956 thriller *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. After Livingston died in 2001 at age 86, Evans wrote a few songs with other collaborators. But, according to Michael Feinstein, "He said it was a strange experience after being teamed with Jay for over 60 years."

Bing of course recorded many of the songs written by Ray Evans with the most successful probably being "Home Cookin'" and "Silver Bells". Also Livingston & Evans wrote three songs for Bing's movie *Here Comes The Groom* and in addition they were behind the album "That Travelin' Two Beat' adapting most of the songs for use by Bing and Rosemary Clooney

Martha Tilton died at the age of 91 on December 8th. She was a top vocalist with Benny Goodman and His Orchestra and was the voice heard on the band's famous "And The Angels Sing" recording. It was she who performed with the band on January 16th, 1938, when it gave the first-ever non-classical concert at Carnegie Hall. Although she was only 22 years old at the time, and still something of a novice, her name became permanently associated with this historic event and with the swing era it symbolised. She matured into an excellent popular singer in later years.

Martha Tilton at work.

Martha Ellen Tilton was born on November 14, 1915 at Corpus Christi, Texas, into a family of keen amateur musicians and singers. Her younger sister Liz also became a professional vocalist. The family moved to Los Angeles when the children were small and Martha began singing with the Sid Lippman band at the Ambassador Hotel's "Cocoanut Grove" while still at high school. She popped up on Bing's Woodbury show in 1935 on a couple of occasions which must have given her a career quite a push at the time.

She married for the first time at 18, giving birth to a son. The marriage broke down, but she continued her career with the Hal Grayson band and, later, with a four-part vocal group, Three Hits and a Miss. In 1937, Benny Goodman and his Orchestra came to Hollywood to appear in the film *Hollywood Hotel.* Goodman had recently lost his vocalist, Helen Ward, and was on the lookout for a replacement. Martha Tilton auditioned for the job, but Goodman characteristically walked out in the middle of her second song. Thinking that she had been rejected, she stopped singing and left in some distress.

The following morning Goodman's secretary called her to offer her $125 a week to join the band. Almost at once she found herself aboard the band bus. She worked 365 days a year for the next two years and did not get home all that time.

Leaving Goodman in April 1939, Martha Tilton joined Paul Whiteman's NBC radio show, Hall Of Fame, and within a year had her own show on the same network, where she was billed as "Liltin' Martha Tilton". In 1942 she signed a recording contract with a new label, Capitol Records, launched by the songwriter Johnny Mercer and two associates. Throughout the war years she was promoted as much for her looks and personality as her singing. Her picture often appeared in fan magazines and publications aimed at the armed forces, although she made a point of appearing fully clothed, never clad in a bathing suit. Her biggest solo hit was "I'll Walk Alone" which reached No. 4 in the charts in 1944. She again worked with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall of February 28, 1946.

She also appeared in a number of films in both singing and acting roles. Most of these are deservedly forgotten now; although an exception must be made for *You'll Never Get Rich,* starring Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth. After the war she continued performing on radio with Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and Bing again on two of his 1951 Chesterfield shows. In 1955, Martha Tilton played herself in the film *The Benny Goodman Story*, after which she virtually retired into private life. Like many of her contemporaries she was tempted back to performing late in life, at the urging of the nostalgia industry. In the 1990s she undertook several tours of the United States and Australia with the veteran bandleader Horace Heidt.

Georgia Gibbs, who died on December 9 at 87, was a versatile "girl singer" who started off fronting big bands in the 1930s and eventually had hits as a solo artist, beginning with "If I Knew You Were Comin' I'd've Baked a Cake" (1950). Her best-known song was probably the tango-tinged "Kiss of Fire," which hit no. 1 on the pop charts in 1952. Gibbs became a regular on television's "Hit Parade," as well as "Toast of the Town" and many other shows. Gibbs, born Frieda Lipschitz, grew up in a Worcester, Mass., Jewish orphanage and began singing in Boston movie theaters as early as age 13 to support her siblings. Singing first as Fredda Lipson — Lipschitz was unacceptably ethnic — she began to attract attention. Then the bandleader Artie Shaw stepped in and took her to the William Morris Agency, where her name was changed to Georgia Gibson. During appearances on the Gary Moore and Jimmy Durante radio show, she was introduced as "Her Nibs, Miss Georgia Gibbs," "nibs" being slang for a person of august authority, an especially attractive title for the fetching youngster who designed her own strapless gowns. Besides a stint on "Hit Parade," which showcased the most popular songs each week, Gibbs was a regular on programs hosted by Moore, Durante, and comedian Danny Kaye, and was a frequent guest on other radio and early television variety shows. During World War II, she toured hospitals, performing with Bing. She also appeared on a Command Performance show with Bing in 1944.

Betty Comden one half of the legendary lyricist-librettist duo of Comden & Green, died on November 23 of heart failure. She was 89. With Adolph Green, her partner of more than 60 years, she contributed the words to Broadway shows such as "On the Town" (1944), "Peter Pan" (1954), "Bells Are Ringing" (1956), "Applause" (1970), "On the Twentieth Century" (1978) and "The Will Rogers Follies" (1991). Screen credits include *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *The Band Wagon* (1953), *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955) *Auntie Mame* (1958) and *Good News* (1947). Comden & Green were Oscar-nominated for writing *The Band Wagon* and *It's Always Fair Weather.*

Born Elizabeth Cohen in Brooklyn in 1917, Comden attended NYU, where she met Green in 1938. The duo wrote lyrics and often the books for more than a dozen shows, many of them built around such stars as Rosalind Russell, Judy Holliday, Phil Silvers, Carol Burnett and Lauren Bacall. They worked with composers Leonard Bernstein, Jule Styne and Cy Coleman, among others, and collaborated with choreographer Jerome Robbins. Their best lyrics were brash and buoyant, full of quick wit, best exemplified by "New York, New York," an exuberant and forthright hymn to their favorite city. Yet the songwriters' biggest pop hits — "The Party's Over," "Just in Time" and "Make Someone Happy" — were simple, direct and heartfelt. On film, their most celebrated work was the screenplay for *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). In 1953, they had another film hit with *The Band Wagon,* starring Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse. That same year, Comden and Green reunited with Bernstein on Broadway for "Wonderful Town," a musical version of "My Sister Eileen." Bing's link with Betty Comden comes from his 1953 recordings of two of the songs from "Wonderful Town" - "Ohio" and "A Quiet Girl".

Janet Blair, the vivacious actress who appeared in several 1940s musicals and comedies, then turned to television and stars like Sid Caesar and Henry Fonda, died on February 19. She was 85. Born Martha Janet Lafferty in 1921 in Altoona, Pa., she attended public schools and sang in the church choir. She would later take the name of a Pennsylvania county in christening herself Janet Blair. She was singing with Hal Kemp's band at the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles in 1941 when she was spotted by a talent scout from Columbia Pictures shortly before Kemp was killed in a traffic accident. When the musicians decided to disband after

Kemp's death, Blair signed a contract with Columbia for $100 a week and changed careers. She would languish in B pictures until Rosalind Russell recommended her for the title role in the comedy *My Sister Eileen*. Thereafter, she appeared opposite George Raft, Cary Grant and many others. She was also the love interest in *The Fabulous Dorseys* but following the 1948 swashbuckler *The Black Arrow*, Columbia dropped her and she turned her back on Hollywood, moving on to the theatre and to television. She also took on the Mary Martin role in the touring version of "South Pacific," clocking more than 1,200 performances in three years.

Janet Blair at work with Bing.

Janet Blair appeared with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall four times in 1942 and 1943 and she also appeared with him on Command Performance programme #52 in 1943 and on the "Soldiers With Wings" radio show broadcast December 22nd.1943.

Yvonne De Carlo died at the age of 84 on January 8. Her link with Bing is tenuous (she was an uncredited handmaiden in *Road To Morocco* and played an uncredited 'girl' i*n Here Come The Waves*). She was best-known for the TV role she played with great gusto in the mid-1960s - that of Lily Munster, the white-faced, big-haired mother in *The Munsters*. De Carlo may be forever associated with that character, but by the time she vamped it up as the voluptuous Lily, she had already been working in Hollywood for 20 years, her sultry sex appeal inspiring her casting in countless "sword and sandal" movies. Born Margaret (Peggy) Yvonne Middleton in Vancouver in 1922, De Carlo had a tough childhood. Her father abandoned the family when she was three. Keen for De Carlo, a talented dancer, to make a career in showbusiness, her mother took her to Los Angeles when she was 15. She soon found regular work dancing in nightclubs. The bandleader Artie Shaw helped with her living expenses so she could pursue work as movie extra. By 1945, De Carlo had had bit parts - mostly as dancers - in 20 films, including *Road to Morocco*. Her fortunes changed dramatically when producer Walter Wanger cast her in the title role of *Salome, Where She Danced*. Although savaged by critics, it was a box-office smash which raised De Carlo's profile significantly. Subsequent film roles varied in quality and it was Cecil B. DeMille's biblical epic *The Ten Commandments* (1956) which gave her most famous film role, as Sephora, the wife of Moses.

GORD ATKINSON'S SHOWBILL

Last November, Gord Atkinson was honoured by a film documentary on the Bravo Canada TV network about his 50-year career in broadcasting. Special guests Rich Little, Paul Anka and Kathryn Crosby paid tribute to him and your Editor has just received a copy of the documentary on DVD.

The producer Pat Edwards has done a remarkable job in putting the documentary together and it flows very smoothly though its 58 minutes. Bing is featured throughout and even starts the programme off with his recording of "Whistling In The Wildwood" which he forgetfully denied ever recording when he was interviewed by Gord. Gord's lifetime admiration for Bing carries through the programme and Rich Little made me laugh as he described his efforts as a young man to get on to Gord's radio show. In the end, he developed an impression of Bing and it was this that got Gord's attention.

Gord met Bing in 1945 and they corresponded regularly. At that time in Canada, the distributor of Bing's records would not allow any radio broadcasting of them because they feared it would adversely affect sales. When Gord got into the junior ranks of broadcasting in the late 1940s, he got permission from Bing to play his records on the radio in Canada and the distributor agreed provided that the broadcast was carried out in the name of a fan club. So Gord formed the Canadian branch of Club Crosby and made a weekly broadcast of Bing's records which not surprisingly attracted a huge audience in Canada. This really helped launch Gord's own career as well. Gord told the story of how he had never heard any of those broadcasts until a few years ago when a friend in England (your Editor) sent him a copy.

The number of celebrities who met Gord is amazing and he estimates that he must have carried out 2000 interviews over the years. Gord met the young Elvis Presley in 1957 and it seemed that the interview he did at the time had been lost. Unbeknown to Gord, the young Rich Little was busy taping many celebrities from the radio in order to develop his own impressions and it was he who discovered the rare interview some 20 years later in his own archives.

It really was a most pleasant programme about a very nice guy and his charming wife, Elaine. And what could be more appropriate than to follow on with:

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

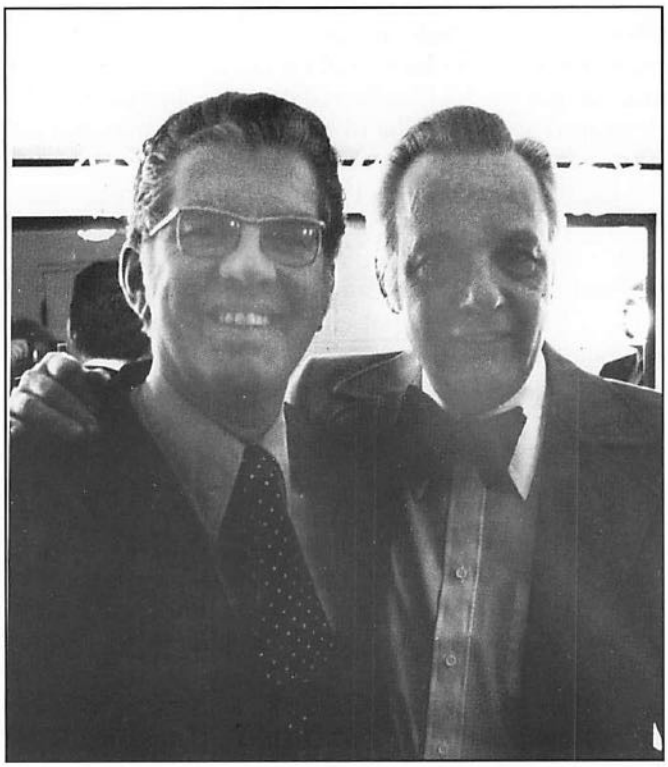
Gord's regular look at some of the many celebrities he has interviewed over the years who had a connection with Bing. This time around, Gord looks

at Bing's younger brother.

Bob Crosby's name was synonymous with swing and Dixieland music. He was a major contributor to the development of what we now fondly remember as "The Big Band Era". Yet, at the time of his death on March 9, 1998, his passing went almost unnoticed by the media. He was almost 80 when cancer took his life at his home in La Jolla, California.

Ten years younger than his famous brother, he always acknowledged the guidance and help that he received from Bing. "He was wonderful to me," Bob told me warmly, "he was more like a father than a brother. When he first went touring he would write me letters and describe his travels and the cities that I would later appear in. Believe me, when I rode into New York for the first time I knew the city just from his ability with words. He gave me an accurate, descriptive picture of Manhattan."

In 1970, Bob was in Ottawa, where he was a headliner at Canada's National Arts Centre. We met after his performance and reminisced into the wee small hours of the morning.



Gord (left) with Bob Crosby

"We came from a very poor family in Spokane, Washington, with not much of a background," he recalled wistfully. "I remember fondly the very first presents Bing sent me after he joined Paul Whiteman. They were a sweater from Saks Fifth Avenue and a tennis racket. He suggested in his note that I take a few lessons and learn how to play tennis, because I would meet nice people on the courts. He was constantly trying to help me to further myself."

During a low point in Bob's life, when his career was floundering, he received the necessary funds to form a new band. "Just as I was ready to call it quits," he told me, "I got the necessary money from a third party, who had been instructed by Bing to help me out – without letting me know where the help came from."

Bob was the youngest of the seven Crosby children and like Bing was taught by the Jesuits at Gonzaga University. Their home, which became an alumni house, was the first residence off the campus. Both Crosby boys studied law.

"We were going to be lawyers," Bob recalled, "and I believe Bing would have been a great attorney with his command of the English language. Dad was a bookkeeper with a produce company and he got five of us into college. Bing and I were serious about pursuing law and strangely enough I followed the same pattern he did. We both left Gonzaga with the idea of raising enough money working in show business so that we could go back to law school, but our love of music sent us in a different direction and we never went back. Bing was, however, given an honorary degree of *Doctor of Music* by our alma mater."

In 1933, at Bing's suggestion, the popular *Anson Week's Band* hired Bob. He had served his apprenticeship around Spokane with local bands and singing at the *Dancethons* of the era. Briefly he was a member of the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, whose co-maestros, Tommy and Jimmy, were friends of Bing. In 1935 Ben Pollack's fabled band broke up and Bob approached several of the former members with the idea of launching a new swing orchestra with a distinctive sound. They formed the legendary *Bob Crosby Band*. A 1938 Chicago engagement at the *Black Hawk Club* established his hard driving musical aggregation as one of the best bands of the swing years.

Bob played a pivotal role in a revival of Dixieland music which his band dispensed until its breakup in 1942. Certainly no one to this day is more closely associated with that toe-tapping, two-beat music. With outstanding jazz musicians like, Billy Butterfield, Yank Lawson, Joe Sullivan, Eddie Miller and Bob Haggart, the band played the top ballrooms and hotels across the continent and was featured on network radio's *Camel Caravan*. The orchestra appeared in films and did the scoring and arrangements of movie musicals, including the 1942 classic, *Holiday Inn*. His vocalists, Doris Day, Gloria De Haven and Kay Starr received their early training with the band which led to their eventual stardom. Bob's musical career was also enhanced when he formed his famous jazz octet, The *Bob Cats*, who won high praise from the critics and public alike.

While he enjoyed a successful career as a singing maestro and as a radio and TV vocalist, he was always aware of the comparisons that people made between him and Bing. Despite the 'Crosby timbre' in his voice and a pleasant sounding baritone quality, he decided early in his career not to try to emulate the singing style of his brother. "I realized it would be a very difficult task," he said during our interview, "to try to follow in Bing's footsteps. I knew I would never be the singer he was - but I don't think I let it bother me. In the back of my mind I always felt that I had to get into some other niche in show business, and as a band leader I realized there would be few comparisons made between us."

When the members of his orchestra were slated for wartime service, the Crosby band was disbanded and their leader joined the Marines. With the rank of captain

he served in the Pacific where he formed musical units and travelled thousands of miles entertaining allied service personnel.

Bing polishes his brother's uniform just after Bob had enlisted in 1944.

After the war he appeared in a few films, was a regular on the Jack Benny Show when Phil Harris left, and eventually had his own program as the singing host of his well-remembered radio show, *Club 15*. A daytime television program followed and other TV assignments.

In the 1960s Bob moved to Hawaii with his wife and their five children and was more or less in semi-retirement. In 1970 he re-formed his band and toured with other popular maestros of a bygone era in a very successful series of *Big Band Revivals*. Canada's capital was on their itinerary.

Bob Crosby was always known for his gentle humour and self-deprecating personality. He is fondly remembered by friends and colleagues as one of the most likeable members of the big band musical fraternity.

Gord Atkinson

[Editor: Gord's 'The Crosby Years' series of CDs remains available and please see Trading Post for details.]

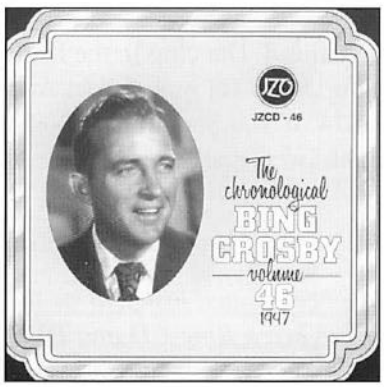
Keeping Track

***Ken Crossland** looks at the new releases.*

COMPACT DISCS

The Chronological Bing Crosby Volumes 46 & 47 Jonzo Records UK £10.60 each

Vol 46: 1. Now Is the Hour 2. Silver Threads Among the Gold 3. Embraceable You 4. Pass That Peace Pipe * 5. They Can't Take That Away From Me 6. Love Walked In 7. My Girl's An Irish Girl 8. But Beautiful 9. Experience (with Nan Wynn) * 10. Ain't Doin' Bad Doin' Nothin' * 11. Ida I Do * 12. Apalachicola, FLA (with The Andrews Sisters) 13. You Don't Have to Know the Language (with The Andrews Sisters) 14. I'll See You In My Dreams 15. Swingin' Down the Lane * 16 & 17. Memories (2 takes, one new to CD) 18. Galway Bay 19. Ballerina 20 & 21. Golden Earrings (2 takes, one new to CD) 22. Pretty Baby 23. Rosalie.



Vol 47: 1. Laroo, Laroo, Lilli Bolero * 2. Blue Shadows on the Trail 3. The Story of Sorrento * 4. A Hundred and Sixty Acres (with The Andrews Sisters) 5. A Hundred and Sixty Acres (reject - with The Andrews Sisters) 6. At The Flying "W" (with The Andrews Sisters) 7. & 8. Once and For Always (2 takes, both duets with Rhonda Fleming, one new to CD) 9. Love Me Or Leave Me * 10. Oh, You Crazy Moon * 11. Easy to Love * 12. I've Got You Under My Skin 13. Imagination * 14. I'd Like to Live in Loveland * 15. Katrina 16. If I Loved You 17. Once And For Always (solo) * 18. Busy Doing Nothing (with Cedric Hardwicke & William Bendix) 19. If You Stub Your Toe On The Moon 20. Lili Marlene 21. Ichabod * 22. The Headless Horseman 23. Haunted Heart * 24. A Fella With An Umbrella 25. A Bluebird Singing In My Heart * 26. Love Thy Neighbour *.

*= new to CD

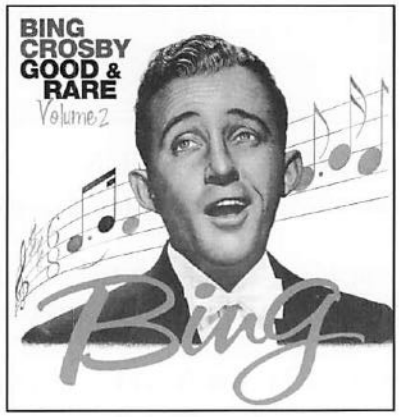
A very welcome return to these pages for the Chronological series, which has now reached an almost mind-blowing Volume 47. Both of these releases feature Bing during the months of November and December 1947, a time when the American music industry was preparing for the strike called by James Petrillo, the President of the American Federation of Musicians, which was due to become effective on 1 January 1948 and would effectively blight the rest of that year. As a result, Bing's catalogue here had an all kinds of everything feel to it – film songs, Andrews Sisters

duets, Cole Porter classics and lots more. It was a time when Bing's voice had recovered some of its strength and timbre that had often seemed to be missing in the preceding years and as a result, some of the tracks here are vocal gems. None more so in my view than 'Lili Marlene', a wartime song that for some reason Bing came to several years late (anyone know why? There must be a reason). I was playing it the other day when an electrician who was working elsewhere in my house, popped his head round the door of my study. He was maybe early 40s, so not an obvious Bing fan, but he said "Aah, Bing Crosby. How did he manage to make singing sound so easy?" How indeed?

Two great CDs, lots of test pressings used as sources and very welcome additions. Less welcome was the news that the series' originator, John McNicholas plans to wind up the series with Volume 51, which would leave us still three or four years short of the arrival of the LP era in 1954/55. However, all is not lost and at the time of writing, I understand that Robin Cherry (who does the transfers) wants to carry on and a record producer called Hugh Palmer (he was involved with the reissue of the Musical Autobiography) is planning to work with him. John McNicholas is happy with this arrangement and the project can retain the Chronological label if not the Jonzo name. We will keep you posted.

Christmas With Frank Sinatra & Bing Crosby **Passport Audio** **USA** **$5.99**

1. Mistletoe And Holly (Frank) 2. Jingle Bells (Bing & Frank) 3. Deck The Halls (Bing & Frank) 4. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen (Bing & Frank) 5. Hark The Herald Angels Sing (Bing & Frank) 6. O Come All Ye Faithful (Bing & Frank) 7. It Came Upon The Midnight Clear (Frank) 8. Away In A Manger (Bing) 9. O Little Town Of Bethlehem (Bing & Frank) 10. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer Bing) 11. Santa Claus Is Coming To Town (Frank) 12. The Christmas Song (Bing & Frank) 13. White Christmas (Bing & Frank)

My thanks to member Kurt Schroeder for spotting this one, which is a CD release of the soundtrack to the Frank and Bing Christmas special from 1957 that appeared on DVD a year or two back. Presented as a single track, which seems rather curious but there we are. If you already have the DVD, you probably wouldn't want this, unless of course, you have to have everything.

That little carry-forward from Christmas rather draws the curtain down on CD releases for this time, although not long after this issue hits your doormat, you may already have "Good & Rare Volume 2" spinning away in your CD players. This is due for release in the UK on the Sepia label in May 2007, with masters supplied by Geoff Milne and sleeve notes by our editor. 27 tracks promised, including some wonderful mid and late 50s stuff such as the 'Cornbelt Symphony' and 'Call Of The South' duets with Gary, and similarly the two duets with Donald O'Connor of similar vintage. Full review next time.

CD/DVD

Bing Crosby – The Centennial Anthology **Master Classics MCS 8070-2 USA** **$14**

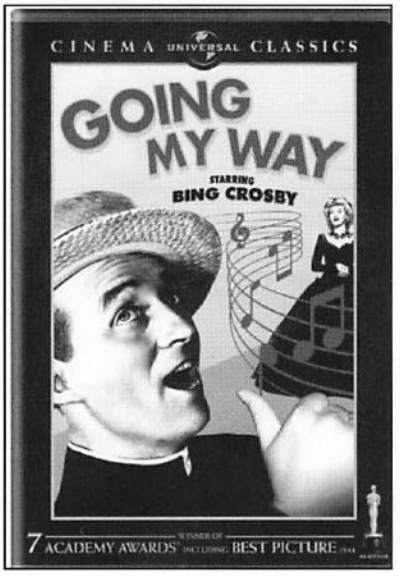
CD: 1. Where The Blue Of the Night 2. I Surrender Dear 3.Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams 4. Dancing In the Dark 5. I'm Through With Love 6. Just A Gigolo 7. Out Of Nowhere 8. I Found A Million Dollar Baby 9. Sweet And Lovely 10. Stardust 11. Just One More Chance 12. I Apologize 13. At Your Command 14. If You Should Ever Need Me 15. A Faded Summer Love 16. Now That You're Gone 17. Too Late 18. Goodnight Sweetheart

DVD: Billboard Girl/I Surrender Dear/Sing Bing Sing/Blue Of The Night

My thanks to Bert Bishop for spotting this one which, despite its title, appears to have been issued last year as the accompanying booklet contains notes written by Athan Maroulis in April, 2006. Nice to see a Bing CD and DVD packaged together as happens with many pop artists.

DVD

New DVDs are rather thin on the ground this time around. There is a new issue of *Going My Way* issued by Universal Cinema Classics available in the States for $14.98 or cheaper and whilst this appears to offer some improved picture quality from what we have had before, it is of course a familiar title. Less familiar is *Angels In The Outfield*, a baseball-based Paul Douglas feature from 1951, which features a cameo from Bing in his capacity



as co-owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates. Issued on the Warner label, it's available from www.amazon.com at around $14.

Nostalgia Family Video is a company I have mentioned before in the context of releases of Bing's Hollywood Palace appearances and the company has now come up with an interesting release that combines a Jimmy Durante show, live from Las Vegas, with a show that is described as "The Bing Crosby Pilot show from 1954, never aired". My guess would be that this is the show broadcast on January 3rd, 1954 but if anyone has a copy to hand and can enlighten me further that would be appreciated. This company has previously issued VHS tapes rather than DVDs and this is described on their web site (www.hollywoodsattic.com) as a "video". You pays your money and takes your chance, I guess.

The most interesting DVD release this quarter comes from a private source, the UK collector John Marshall. His **Footloose Follies** release provides a six-hour feast of nostalgia film and television clips all on a single disc. John's coverage extends from 1928 through to the 1970s and is presented in four one and a half hour chapters. Much of the material can be accessed through internet sites, but John makes the point that licensing restrictions often mean that such sites only offer a brief snippet of a particular song or scene. "Here" says John "you get the full segment, regardless of how long. Crosby content is plentiful, mainly from late 50s TV plus Hollywood Palace. Just about any body who has a reputation in the world of good music can be found here and there is footage here that not only had I not seen before, but didn't even know existed. Two songs by Buddy Clark and Al Bowlly are examples. Quality is dictated primarily by the original source material that John has used but was to my eyes and ears, very watchable. See *Trading Post* for details.

WHAT'S ON THE WEB?

As ever, eBay, the internet auction site continues to come up with interesting pieces of Crosbyana and this quarter has seen two particular items of interest. One was the coat, apparently worn by Bing for entertaining troops in Europe during WW2, its authenticity seemingly verified by a sewn-in label showing Bing's name – just as though it were something his mother might have done when sending him off to school! With a starting bid of $500 and a Buy-It-Now price of $2500, there were … no takers. I'm not surprised.

Of greater interest (to me at least) was a 1924 Gonzaga University Yearbook, the first such book ever published by the University. The seller described it as containing all the "typical yearbook stuff like clubs, students, team pictures, drama, etc" but of course the most interesting feature was a photo page of "Law Students", where amidst the images of future legal eagles was that of an itinerant troubadour in the making. Interesting too to see how young Bing looks alongside some of his contemporaries! Maybe true lawyers are born old! Bing was right – it was never the profession for him.

Remember all the fuss a few months back when the internet giant Google paid out something like a billion and a half dollars for the new internet kid on the block, YouTube? For those who haven't checked it out, YouTube is most famous for the way in which anyone can upload any video – home movies, personal takes on events etc, although for us in the Crosby world, it's the TV clips that are most interesting. And there are hundreds of them. It's the kind of site that once you start watching, you can't get away from because the links are so clever. You search for Bing and find him duetting with Dinah Shore, and you are then immediately prompted to other Dinah duets, which leads you perhaps to Perry Como and then back to the Bing and Perry duet. Quality is often mixed, but then that can be as much to do with the 50s kinescope nature of the material. It's worth a look at http://www.youtube.com/ - look out particularly for the 1963 duet between Bing and Dinah Shore from her TV show. The full version is just sitting there waiting to be viewed, good quality and Bing in great form. There's also a similar site at www.tv4u.com although not so easy to find things on there as on You Tube but worth a look. Don't start near bedtime though because if you do, you will be up all night.

All for now. Happy listening.

Ken Crossland
ken@kencrossland.co.uk http://www.kencrossland.co.uk

STOP PRESS

Laura Wiggins

As we were proof-reading this issue in mid March, the sad news reached us of the death of Laura Wiggins who had worked alongside Wig for the last 16 years in distributing BING magazine and dealing with the many contacts with ICC members.

Your editor and his wife Pat plus Michael and Judy Crampton were always made so welcome by Laura in our visits to Arlington. Laura had suffered poor health for the last few years but she kept going to support Wig despite this. Wig and Laura had had a long and happy marriage and our thoughts are with Wig and his children, Frontis and Joanne, at this time. The photo shows Laura and Wig in 1994 in happier days.

The New BBC series

We mentioned this earlier in the magazine and since then we have been working with Barbra Paskin to arrange meetings with relevant personalities including Kathryn Crosby, Howard Crosby, Stephanie Plowman and many more. We understand that the series will be written and presented by Michael Freedland. Michael is a good writer and a first class presenter but in the past accuracy has not been one of his strengths. However we have supplied an up-to-date version of *Bing Crosby – Day By Day* to Barbra Paskin who seems a stickler for having the facts right as is her producer Neil Rosser and hopefully we shall not have anything to complain about in that regard.

We understand that the series will start its run on April 6 and it will be possible to listen to each programme for up to a week afterwards over the Internet. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/radio2 and follow the links.

Bing to receive a 'Harvey'

On May 19th at 6 pm, the Harvey Award Dinner is due to take place at Rustic Lodge, James Stewart Museum, 845 Philadelphia St., Indiana, PA 15701. The press announcement states:

Kathryn Crosby, wife of legendary Bing Crosby, receives the "Harvey" in honor of her husband, and is honored herself with "The George Bailey Award". The presentation caps off the annual JIMMY STEWART FESTIVAL WEEK, MAY 13-19, at the James Stewart Museum. Hosted by Rich Little and Nick Clooney.

Great to see Kathryn and Bing being honoured in this way. How appropriate for Rich Little to be one of the hosts. He does a marvellous impression of Jimmy Stewart and his description of the times when he used to meet Jimmy is hilarious with Rich doing both sides of the conversation.

Go to http://www.jimmy.org/event for more information (phone: 724/349-6112 or toll-free at 1-800/83-JIMMY). The cost is $125 per person and reservations are being accepted now.

Betty Hutton (1921-2007)

We have already had the largest *Once In A While* section ever in this issue and sadly we now have news of the death of another star who worked with Bing.

Betty Hutton, the rambunctious blonde band vocalist (billed as "America's Number One Jitterbug" in the late 1930s) died of colon cancer on March 11, 2007. She was 86. Betty signed with Paramount in 1941 and went on to become one of the most popular musical comedy box-office stars of the 1940s. Often paired with bumbling comedian Eddie Bracken, the irrepressible, almost manically energetic, Hutton starred in a slew of successful but largely mediocre musicals shaped by her mentor songwriter B.G. 'Buddy' DeSylva, as well as biopics of speakeasy owner Texas Guinan (*Incendiary Blonde* 1945), silent film heroine Pearl White (*The Perils of Pauline* 1947) and singer Blossom Seeley (*Somebody Loves Me* 1952). She is best remembered for her superb comic performance in Preston Sturges' *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944), her suitably rowdy Annie Oakley in the Irving Berlin musical, *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950) and her starring role in as a highwire artist in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952).

Hutton's completely unrestrained playing style, decidedly an acquired taste, seemed to suggest at once

insecurity, unhappiness and a possibility for temperament. Hutton walked out of her Paramount contract after the studio refused to allow her second husband, choreographer Charles O'Curran, to direct her films; her film career subsequently went into a downward spiral and despite successful vaudeville tours in the 1950s, by the 1960s Hutton had slipped into obscurity. A virtual recluse, making occasional headlines with her marital, physical and emotional problems, she filed for bankruptcy in 1967 (after having made and spent $10 million during her heyday) and was discovered working as a cook and housekeeper at a Rhode Island rectory in the mid-1970s.

In 1980 Hutton made a heralded return to the Broadway stage as Miss Hannigan in the hit musical "Annie" and in the mid-1980s became a teacher of film and television at Salve Regina College in Rhode Island, where she had earned her liberal arts degree in 1986.

Betty discusses going the long way home with Bing in Here Come The Waves.

Betty co-starred with Bing in *Here Come The Waves* in 1944 when she played twins. She sang "I Promise You" with Bing in that film. She also starred in *Star-Spangled Rhythm* (1942) in which Bing made a brief appearance and she joined Bing in *Duffy's Tavern* (1945). Betty appeared on Bing's Kraft Music Hall on December 31, 1942 and she worked with him on a *Command Performance* show in 1944. Press reports indicate that Bing attended a party at Betty's home in January 1943 and sang many songs. Their final interaction professionally appears to have been in *The Greatest Show On Earth* in 1952.

From records to books, we just love hoarding

Our enthusiastic member Seamus Kelly of Worcester in the UK was spotlighted by his local paper in March.

A survey carried out by an online auction site has shown Britain to be a nation of hoarders - and people could be sitting on a goldmine of unwanted junk. Internet site eBay has worked out that our cast-offs could be turned into hard cash, which would make the average household £325 each - or £17.7 billion in total. That's not bad going for something we have had lying in the attic for the past five years.

Ebay spokesman Richard Kanareck explained: "While we might want to keep a teddy bear or treasured piece of jewellery, there's no sense hanging on to an old mobile phone or the power tool that you're never going to put to good use, but which someone else might treasure."

One person's junk is another man's treasure - and this could well lead to a priceless and unique collection which could turn into one of the most comprehensive in the county.

Avid music collector **Seamus Kelly** from Worcester, has proved his thousands of records and CDs are an asset to him leading a happy life. Mr Kelly, aged 73, has said he regularly listens to his collection and still adds to it every week. He claims to have the biggest record collection in the city. He keeps it in his flat and a garage.

The music fan, who is an expert on the legendary Bing Crosby, has said he is having to put up more shelves to store his growing collection He has more than 2,321 tracks recorded by his hero, and has the singer's lifetime works captured on EP, CD, LP and tapes.

He first heard the music of Bing Crosby when he was in his native Ireland in the late 1940s and listened to the song "San Antonio Rose". He was unable to buy the record as he was young and did not have any money, but when he started his first job at the age of 17 he knew it would be the start of his collection.

"When I heard the song I knew then that when I did get a job I was going to buy a record of Bing Crosby. I started working in a textile factory and spent my first wage of £1-1-0 on a 78rpm of Bing," he said. Mr Kelly, who also enjoys listening to his swing, jazz and country music, says he has a huge interest in many of the old-time classics.

"I would never sell. To me it is a very valuable collection. I spend between £20 - £50 a week on the music. Sometimes I buy from the market but there is a few of the old time records coming out on CD which I get from a specialist company in London."

Mr Kelly, who is retired, says to him collecting the records is infectious. His wife, Christina, is also a fan and the couple spend their Sundays listening to a variety of tracks. He said he was unable to put a number on how many he had and estimates it to be in the thousands.

"Music collection is like a disease. You just can't stop collecting and you are trapped. In terms of music I can't put a price on it. It is everything to me. My love of Bing Crosby has made me a lot of friends across the world. It is an absolute passion."

(Editor: The article goes on to provide details of how to recycle items in Worcester and finishes with the following.)

OUR TOP 10 MOST TREASURED ITEMS

1. Books 2. Watches 3. Records 4. Mobile phones
5. VHS videos 6. Jewellery 7. Soft Toys 8. Camera
9. Ornaments 10. Computer.

LATE NEWS FLASH

The BBC series mentioned on the previous page has had to be postponed. Further update in the next issue.

"Bing Goes Bang Bang"
This totally unauthorized poster was put together by Ursula Andress's butler who happened to be Originaldo's illegitimate Uncle Raz. Ursula had a passionate crush on Bing Crosby and tried to persuad Ian Fleming to use his clout and replace Sean Connery with Bing. Ursula is said to never have made love without one of Bing's records spinning next to her. Needless to say, Sean deservedly remained the one and only 007 but he did agree to have White Christmas played every time he and Ursula embraced, both off and on screen.
Bing goes Bang, Bang!!
BING BOND 707
URSULA ANDRESS · JOSEPH WISEMAN · JACK LORD · BERNARD LEE

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL, ANNIE? IT'S A LISTENING MACHINE OUR MEN OF SCIENCE HAVE INVENTED!
WE'VE GOT THOSE IN MY WORLD TOO, AH-NEE! WE CALL THEM RADIOS!
I'LL-BE HOME-FOR CHRISTMAS-
© 2006 Tribune Media Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved
Oh, I LIKE THIS PRETTY SONG VERY MUCH!
YEAH! THAT'S A GUY NAMED BING CROSBY!
www.comicspage.com ted@storytellersworkshop.com
IT'S ABOUT WHEN SOLDIERS GO OFF TO WAR-AND DREAM THAT SOMEDAY MAYBE THEY'LL BE BACK WITH THE FOLKS THEY LOVE-
MAEDER SLAMDYAK 12-25-06
I SEE! IT MUST BE VERY BEAUTIFUL TO DREAM THAT-WHEN YOU ARE A SOLDIER FAR AWAY-

Bing Crosby

December 31, 1975

Dear Mr. Satkowski:

I'm very grateful to you for the kind letter which I recently received.

You say you don't like the word "fan", and I can understand why. It does sound like a juvenile term. I don't like "admirer" too much, either. I really prefer "Loyal supporter". That indicates a lively and active interest in everything I've done - and you certainly have had that interest, going way, way back.

If you can remember me as the Cremo Cigar Singer, you do indeed go back!

I'm glad that my use of the big words gave you the inspiration to pick up a good vocabulary for yourself. It's a very helpful thing, I'm sure, in any occupation to have a good choice of words.

Glad you liked the Dinah Shore Show. That was a fun show to do because there was practically no rehearsal at all. She's got things so well organized you just walk in and everybody does his own thing, and it's an opportunity to be himself.

I do hope that you and your family had a festive holiday season.

With warmest regards, believe me to be -

Sincerely yours,

Bing Crosby

BC:lm

P.S. Dear Micheline:

Merci, mille fois pour votre sentiments -

Bing

Mr. Henry Satkowski
152 Washington Street
Lodi, New Jersey 07644

RADIO STARS

THE LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY RADIO MAGAZINE

WHY AL JOLSON QUIT!

How one man defied the radio world

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